



The Promise of the Millennium

A newsletter established to facilitate community action for advancing girls' equal right to education, in education and through education. This ICEDA's quarterly newsletter attempts to promote networking & information exchange among CSOs, CBOs & local government bodies on children's rights.

Education is a precious gift for children

Waadaaa Barkumee

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Child Labour, as harmful traditional practice

Child Labour remains a serious problem in the developing world today. ILO estimates that the number of working children between 5-14 years of age is about 120 million; the majority of them are in Africa, Asia & Latin America (ILO, 1998).

In Ethiopian, children residing in rural areas are engaged in looking after domestic animals, weeding, harvesting, fetching water and firewood, keeping siblings and preparing food for the family.

Some of the factors contributing to the child labor are situation of persisting poverty which requires all family members to contribute to household income. Some of the work in which children are involved are done under hazardous work environment. The term of payment among the rural areas is on annual basis while among the urban children, it is on monthly basis.

Ethiopia has ratified the UN convention on the Rights of the Child and included provisions in her constitution on basic rights and privileges of children. The labour proclamation of Ethiopia No.42/93 stipulates that children below 14 years are not allowed to work. Employment of young workers between 14 and 18 years is also subject to certain conditions such as maximum of seven working hours per day, prohibition of overtime work, night work and provision of weekly rest and public days.

The MOLSA survey on child Labour (2001) reveals that only 4 in 10 rural working children went to school (formal and non formal). According to UNICEF (2001), 50% of the children work 10-12 hours per day 32% have dropped out

Cognizant of the fact that child labour is a denial of the right to education, the right to play and participate as well as the opportunity to reach full physical and psychological development, ICEDA has launched a community-based program on advancing basic education to rural working children by integrating the practice as one of harmful

traditional practices affecting the right of the children in the rural areas.

Currently, in Akaki district, 1059 working out of school children (365 female) in 12 most disadvantaged villages have got access to education. One of the villages to be mentioned is **Heechu** were there are 361 formal 143 non-formal education students. Totally, 504 children are benefiting from the program. As the village is sited in the most industrial area of the country, most of the children are exposed to some kind of exploitative work.

Through

- a) Capacity building trainings for key influencers
- b) Promoting the rights to play through introducing various play and games sporting
- c) Strengthening formal schools through providing school furniture and educational materials and toilets
- d) Providing tutorials and counselling programme for female students.
- e) Organizing joint events for creating awareness on child rights, ending child labour, physical punishment and early and forced marriages
- f) advocacy & lobby (Day of African Child and human rights day celebration)
- g) Establishing mothers forums, girls forums and child rights advocates clubs
- h) Establishing ABE centres for working out of school children
- i) Establishment of water points near the schools
- j) Promoting social declarations/ sanctions on child labour, physical punishment and early marriage
- k) Establishment of children desk at the district police office.

ICEDA is fighting child Labour, physical punishment and early forced marriages by collaborating with.

- Community traditional leaders (Abba Gedas)
- Social self-support institutions (Idir)
- Schools community and
- Local authorities

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Telephone 251116477709 www.iceda.org.et, e-mail: dtsegni@yahoo.com

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Celebration of African Child day

This year, ICEDA has collaborated with a Canada-based NGO called **Right to play (RTP) Ethiopia Office** and Akaki Wereda Education Office to organize an advocacy event in **Insilale Primary School** on June 16, 2008. The basic objective of this international event is to promote open dialogue and bring about positive attitudinal change on early marriage and exclusion of children with disabilities. The Akaki district is known by the high rate of child labour, female school drop outs, class repetitions and stigma on people/children living with disabilities. These were found to be pervasive problems those need to pull attention of all stakeholders to address them. The theme of the event was chosen to be **“End Exclusion of children at risk now”** to mitigate problems mentioned above.

ICEDA brought the newly elected female House speaker of the Akaki Woreda, **Ms. Asnaketch Teshome** to deliver opening speech. In her remark, Ms. Asnaketch noted that “children are the makers of future Ethiopia and hence the new millennium will be dedicated to promote rights of all children be it street children, children with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children without any exclusion.” Ms. Asnaketch called upon the community to send and keep their children to School, encourage them to participate in sport and play programs. She also promised that her government is dedicated to respect the rights of children and called upon the communities to unite hands together to stop child labour, abduction and rape in order to reduce school drop outs and class repetitions.

ICEDA’s Executive Director, Mr. Teshome Segni, on the event said that the status of basic education in the district is encouraging when compared to the 1998 situation. In 1998 there were only 7 schools to serve over 14 thousand children but now there are 42 schools in the 29 villages. However, still there are high school drop outs and high repetitions due to high prevalence of early forced marriages and abduction and child labour. He urged the traditional leaders and the community that the traditional leaders should consider that child labour as one of the pressing harmful traditional practices.

ICEDA awarded two couple teachers who were role models by playing great role in rescuing survivors of early marriage and abduction and assisting them to get legal protection. At the same time, outstanding girls from 30 schools were awarded school bags, 7 best tutors were awarded training opportunities, 5 best schools awarded toilets for girls and 5 schools awarded desks.

On the occasion, Oromia Education Bureau representative, Mr. Almayehu Showel and Mrs. Wubnesh Maatii, head of female education department awarded awarded female students called **Marshu Gebeyehu and Birile Baca**, who challenged their parents on the arranged early marriage and continued their education.

In his closing speech, Mr. Almayehu Showel appreciated the courage of the two teachers for their exemplary works and ICEDA and other organizations who are engaged in educating the community about children’s rights. He similarly condemned abduction as the practice denies the right of girls to education and play as their male brothers.

After listening to the appeals of girls and ICEDA, Tulemma Abba Geddas passed declarations on perpetrators and mediators of early forced marriage (Common 10-16 ages), abduction and rape. They also encouraged communities to send their children to School and allow them to participate in Sport and play activity. They also made strong remark on the rights of children with disabilities and girls. They called for communities to stop hiding children in the house and they challenged the social stigma attached to this section of the communities. Tulemma Abba Geddas (traditional leaders), said “we know children and people living with Disabilities are regarded as punishment of God to their families and usually families prefer to hide their children being fearful for gossip and social exclusion...however this is neither true nor culturally and morally supported, therefore I called the Oromo communities to take stand against exclusion of children living with disabilities.



On the occasion, a power lifter living with physical disability, **athlete Tilahun Jemaneh**, said, “it is clear that all children have the right to play, right to have fun and rest, however there are some groups of children who are denied of these rights, basically children and youth with disabilities are denied the access to go to school, take role in sport and play activity. He added “ I would like to show and demonstrate that people living with disabilities can go to school; participate in sport activities...I have extensive experience competing in all African games, in many international and local games representing my country... I have collected many medals”

Panel discussion, Sports competition among female schools songs, dramas and certification of coaches trained by the right to play were part of the event.

Over 1000 residents of 7 villages, school children and government officials as well as media personnel have attended the event that was celebrated in the district for 5th time.

Role Models

In this issue we will present a girl who escapes early arranged marriage by the effort of girls' rights protection clubs established by ICEDA.



Her name is Marshu Gebeyehu. She was born and grew up in the village called Heechu, a village only 3 kilometres out of Addis.

She was this year's guest to represent girls to present her personal testimony to the community influencers, politicians and the media on the occasion of celebration of the Day of African Child, June 16, 2008 at Insilale Primary school.

One day, when she was in Kuriyo Medani Alem Primary School in grade 4, her father told her that her education is enough because she got a husband. She was shocked by the words she heard and went to her girls' rights protection club leaders and told them all what she was told. Marshu was only 12 years of age at this time. The club leaders tried to convince her parents. But due to the strong and deep-rooted tradition, the parents were reluctant to cancel the marriage arrangement. Then, the club leader took the case to the woreda court and the parents were legally forced to sign not to let her marry off. Thanks to the strong girls' rights protection club leaders, now she is learning in grade 9 as one of the leading students in Akaki Textile Secondary School. **Marshu Gebeyehu, is now 17 year of age.**

Facts about Akaki district

Before 10 years, when ICEDA was conceived, the majority of school age children in the Akaki district were out-of school due to the lack of sufficient schools nearby, the high prevalence of harmful traditional practices and low community awareness on the rights of children. At that time, in 1998, there were 14,869 schools –age children in the district. Since there were only 7 schools only for 2,451 children got access to educations. Almost 84 percent of the

school-age children in the Akaki district were out of school in same year. The gender gap was over 23 percent.

This year, in 2007/2008, the number of schools has reached 42, while the number of students has reached 11,212. The gender gap has decreased to 13 percent. This year around one thousand new comers have been admitted.

However, though the number of schools in the district has increased at an encouraging rate, still the student – classroom ratio is 1:61 while the teacher -student ratio is 1:50. This situation reveals that still much needs to be done to reduce the current gender gap, to reduce the student – classroom ratio as well as the teacher -student ratio in order to achieve the MDG through quality primary education for all citizens.

This year, as a pilot project, 3852 female students in the 30 rural schools from grade 1 to 8 have got the tutorial program conducted for 2 hours per week, 4 days per month and 32 contact hours on the subjects selected by the female students which are found to be difficult to understand. In average, 8 tests were given for the girls to assess their improvement. The 30 schools were selected by the district education office. Five girls' toilets are being constructed in 5 rural villages.

This year, 929 mothers in 15 villages were meeting monthly at their respective villages to discuss on various issues including harmful traditions and values, HIV/AIDS personal hygiene, family planning, livelihood improvement.

This year the Abu Lugna, Chaffe Tuma and Dawara Tino mothers' forums were exemplary in organizing different social events during International Women's Day (March 08) to raise funds and to celebrate their successes. The members have now begun to own and control assets such as sheep, goats and heifers. They have also supported the children of poor women by purchasing school materials with their marry-go-round contribution. Above all else, they have started using family planning services and their personal hygiene is improving as a result of the participation of our female teachers as a member of the forum.

Children attending the ABE program in Akaki district, 2008

Age group	0-6		7-12		13-15		16-18		18+		Total		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Doddotaa-Cirrii	0	0	25	35	10	10	20	8			55	53	108
Galle-Koticha	2	2	53	24	3	0	0	0	0	0	58	26	84
Abuu Lugnaa	5	3	22	13	9	1	2	6	0	0	38	23	61
Abuu Loyyaa	2	1	40	10	13	6					55	17	72
Abuu Seeraa	15	13	7	3	0	0	0	0	20	8	42	24	66
Abuu Sarkamaa	3	3	18	10	3	6	0	0	30	10	54	29	83
Quftuu Kombolcha	1	1	9	11	13	12	0	0	0	0	23	24	47
Yerer Abayyii	4	2	13	8	21	6	4	10	34	0	76	26	102
Billi Silxoo	3	2	12	11	11	12	8	10	25	20	59	55	114
Gammadaa	8	6	18	12	7	3	5	1	29	18	67	40	107
Heechuu	17	21	34	13	9		6	0	48	7	114	41	155
Makko	13	11	20	24	4	1	1		8	0	46	36	82
Total	73	65	271	174	103	57	46	35	194	63	687	394	1081