



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Libraries improving literacy of pre-school children Code-Ethiopia

IMPACT CASE STUDY

CODE-Ethiopia's Ebooks and Family Literacy pilot project improves the environment for early literacy development of children in rural areas by offering family literacy sessions in community libraries, in which parents learn to help their children interact with books. The pilot project –

- Improved children's early literacy skills in three pilot communities: assessments conducted by CODE-Ethiopia found that print awareness of children who took part in the project increased from 54% to 78%. Print awareness is a child's earliest understanding that written language carries meaning, and children who have good print awareness are more likely to succeed in learning to read.
- Increased availability of reading materials for pre-school children by creating new story and picture books in print and electronic formats in Amharic, which is Ethiopia's official language, and Afaan Oromoo, the mother tongue of over 30 million Ethiopians.
- Supported 25 community libraries to use the new books in family literacy sessions, increasing early literacy learning opportunities for pre-school children in communities across the country.

CODE-Ethiopia is a non-governmental organization that works through a network of 97 community libraries to promote literacy. In 2010, research conducted by USAID into children's reading performance at primary schools in Ethiopia found that a third of children in second grade and a significant number of third-graders could not read at all. The findings led to urgent nation-wide efforts to address child literacy, including establishment of kindergartens and pre-school literacy programmes at kindergartens. However, kindergartens still absorb less than 14% of Ethiopia's 7.5 million pre-school children (Ministry of Education, 2012). In addition, Ethiopia lacks mother-tongue reading materials for young children.



Fiche Community Library projects an e-book onto their new projection screen during a family literacy session.

"I feel empowered by being involved in using technology and e-books to work with children and parents."
- Almaz Achamyeleh, librarian, Durbete Community Library.

CODE-Ethiopia's Ebooks and Family Literacy pilot project seeks to address these issues by creating opportunities for early literacy development in community libraries, using technology. With a small grant from the EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (up to US\$20,000), CODE-Ethiopia equipped three rural community libraries in Fiche, Durbete and Dire Dawa with desktop computers, a projector and projection screen, and launched an early literacy development training and e-book creation programme.



During family literacy sessions in three rural community libraries, parents learn to read with their children, encouraging early literacy development.

In just one year, the pilot project –

- Produced 12 new books for pre-school children, in print and electronic formats, in the Amharic and Afaan Oromoo languages;
- Developed workshop facilitation guides in Amharic and English for community librarians on running family literacy sessions using the new books;
- Trained six librarians from the three pilot sites to run family literacy programmes in their communities;
- Supported the three libraries to organize family literacy sessions, reaching over 40 families who were also given new books to take home to read with their children;
- Trained community librarians at the three pilot sites to engage community members in writing stories for pre-school children in local languages. The three communities produced six texts, in Sidaamu Afoo, Harari, Af Soomaali, Silte, Harari and Tigrigna;
- Trained community librarians from an additional 22 community libraries from across the country to conduct family literacy sessions and guide parents in helping their children develop early literacy skills.

“The e-books were so clear and easy to understand. It was almost as if I had the librarian right next to me, helping me learn. Because of the books I was no longer falling behind in my studies and was finally able to pass my exams.”

– Bethlehem, participant from Fiche Community Library.

The future

All of the 25 community libraries trained through the project are committed to offering family literacy in their communities in the future. The international development organization, CODE (Canadian Organization for Development through Education) will fund distribution of the new pre-school books through education offices and CODE-Ethiopia's network of community libraries. CODE-Ethiopia presented the project at international library and literacy education conferences in Africa, Europe and the United States, and three international organizations have expressed interest in supporting scale-up and further development of the pilot project.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in May 2014. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library's impact assessment. For further information, contact CODE-Ethiopia director, Alemu Abebe Woldie: alemuabebe2002@yahoo.com.

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to knowledge in developing and transition economy countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.