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The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Education

USAID

Basic Education Support



Improving the Quality and Equity of
Primary Education in Ethiopia:
A Decade of Progress
1995 - 2005

ACRONYMS

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
AED	Academy for Educational Development
AEI	African Education Initiative
AGSP	Ambassador s Girls Scholarship Program
BESO	Basic Education System Overhaul/Basic Education Strategic Objective
BTWG	BESO Technical Working Group
CDA	Complementary Drought Assistance
CGPP	Community-Government Partnership Program
CSAP	Community School Activity Program
CSGP	Community School Grants Program
EDC	Education Development Center
EMA	Education Media Agency
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
GAC	Girls Advisory Committee
GEAC	Girls Education Advisory Committee
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
ICDR	Institute for Curriculum Development and Research
IFESH	International Foundation for Education and Self-Help
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
IPBCS	Integrated Planning, Budgeting, and Control System
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
KETB	Kabele Education and Training Board
MADE	Master of Arts in Distance Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
NFE	Non-formal Education
NLA	National Learning Assessment
NOE	National Organization for Examinations
PGDDE	Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RSEB	Regional State Education Bureau
SMC	School Management Committee
SNNPR	Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Region
SNRS	Somali National Regional State
TCA	Technical Cooperation Administration
TDA	Tigray Development Association
TEI	Teacher Education Institution
TTC	Teacher Training College
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WLI	World Learning Incorporated
WEO	Woreda Education Office
WTS	Women Teacher Support

Message from Bill Hammink, USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director

This short history of BESO presents a chronology of the project from its inception in 1995 through 2005. Ten years in educational development is not a long period of time. Education progress is a work of many generations, one generation at a time. Through the BESO project, USAID's support to Ethiopian education has played a critical role in setting the foundation for equitable quality education throughout Ethiopia.

BESO was created at a time of great challenges in Ethiopian education. With only one fifth of the school-age children having access to primary education in 1994, Ethiopia needed major and quick investments to change this around. It was therefore important to expand the primary school system at a speed unprecedented in any country's educational development. At the same time, decentralization devolved authority to regions and later to woredas (districts).

BESO directly and significantly supported rapid growth in access to primary education and worked in full collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Regional State Education Bureaus (RSEBs). BESO helped to change the learning-teaching processes, strengthen the planning and management systems, mobilize communities and build their capacity to manage their own educational development. BESO is working in all regions, and, as a result, has strengthened the bond between American and Ethiopian peoples. BESO is now a household name in many areas. It is known through the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) of more than 5,000 schools with which it has been working, as well as through the work of the Girls Education Advisory Committees (GEACs) it helped establish in each school. There are hundreds of stories to tell about girls who escaped early marriage and harassment. BESO is known in the Woreda Education Offices (WEOs) and the RSEBs through the systematic and effective capacity building it helped undertake for thousands of education experts. These are well recorded achievements.

To the delight of USAID, Ethiopian educators at all levels, and the implementing partners who worked hard through the years, many of the innovations are now being adopted by regional education bureaus and institutionalized into the system. With the added momentum that has been brought about by the U.S. President's African Education Initiative (AEI), USAID will continue with its support to strengthen these useful innovations through: the teacher education institutes and cluster in-service programs, PTAs and GEACs, the alternative basic education centers, and the computerized planning and management systems.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Dr. Cameron Bonner, the first chief of USAID's education office and a friend of Ethiopia, who was instrumental, in cooperation with our Ethiopian colleagues in the Ministry and the regions, in developing the comprehensive BESO project and leading it in its first years.

We are pleased to be part of BESO's history and look forward to many more years of rapid progress for primary education in Ethiopia and to increasing the bond between the U.S. Government (USG), the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) and Ethiopian educators at all levels.

Message from Aberra Makonnen, USAID/Ethiopia Mission Chief of the Basic Education Services Office

I have been part of the history of BESO since eight months after it was launched in 1995. It has been the most satisfying years of my professional life.

The BESO years were not a "bed of roses". BESO took some time to prove its value but, when it did, it became a household name. The last ten years saw many challenges decentralization of the education system to the regions and, more recently, to the woredas, being a major one. Devolving both authority and responsibility in the education sector required enormous capacity building at all levels. BESO took on this challenge and has been a dependable partner to the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) through the years.

In terms of capacity building, BESO was careful to not prescribe ready-made interventions. BESO made the needs of the beneficiaries and their working environment the center of all capacity building efforts. During the woreda capacity building initiative in 2004, more than 3,200 education officers from all woredas in the country were trained in planning and management using their own data and the socio-economic realities of their respective woredas. This approach has been used also in PTA training programs, as well as in the 22 Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) around the country. It is encouraging to see that planning skills at the woreda level have improved and that woreda office heads and planners can see eye-to-eye with their colleagues in the regional offices. On the other hand, it is important to note that high staff turnover at all levels of administration is diluting capacity building efforts. There is a dire need to address the causes of staff turnover.

Usually projects come and go without ever penetrating the hearts and minds of its beneficiaries. BESO has been different. At the national level, the BESO Technical Working Group (BTWG) played a prominent role in ensuring that BESO fits the MoE's Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), thereby gaining the confidence of the GOE. Chaired by the Head of ESDP and Planning Department of the Ministry of Education (MOE), the BTWG brought key stakeholders together to provide essential guidance and support to BESO. At the grassroots level, the Woreda Education Offices (WEO) and Kebele and PTA leaders played a central role in identifying their school's needs, developing proposals for BESO support, and overseeing the implementation of school development activities.

It is difficult to narrate the history of BESO in full. Nevertheless, we hope this short summary captures the important milestones and provides some illustrative examples of successes under BESO. Finally, we would like to congratulate all development partners who gave life and meaning to BESO and to whom this story is dedicated. I would also like to recognize my two colleagues, Drs. Cameron Bonner and Tassew Zewdie, who were instrumental in the development of BESO, as well as their leadership during its earliest years.

INTRODUCTION

"Education is the process by which we transmit our experiences, new findings and values, accumulated over the years, in our struggle for survival and development through generations."

Adapted from the *Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia*, Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 1994

During the last ten years, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) worked collaboratively towards two related goals:

- ¥To provide Ethiopia's children with accessible, affordable, equitable, effective, safe, and sustainable opportunities to learn;
- ¥To help the next generation of Ethiopians acquire the knowledge and skills they need, not only to survive, but to thrive in the 21st century.

From the beginning, USAID and the MoE recognized the enormity of the challenges in achieving these two ambitious goals. Yet they also knew, as an Ethiopian proverb cleverly explains, that "when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion". Other partners working alongside USAID and the MoE included: educational administrators, researchers, curriculum developers, teacher trainers, classroom instructors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter-governmental organizations, the private sector, communities, parents, and students from all over the country.

Acknowledging the substantial contributions of these partners, USAID and the MoE wish to document the impressive results from the last decade (1995-2005) through this brief chronology of the Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO). USAID and MoE fully concur that BESO contributed significantly to the educational transformation that transpired in Ethiopia during this decade.

USAID and the MoE wish to take this opportunity to also look ahead--to the coming decade--to identify ways to consolidate, sustain and replicate recent successes, as well as to address current and future challenges to improving basic education in Ethiopia.

Before BESO: The Ethiopian Basic Education Context

In the late 20th century, far from being a fundamental human right, basic education was limited to a small number of Ethiopian urban elite. The vast majority of people--85-90% of the population--lived in rural areas where there was virtually no formal education available. Instead, children learned through their daily lives, and traditional wisdom was passed down from generation to generation. As the 20th century drew to a close, Ethiopia's educational system was in a state of crisis. The MoE estimated the gross primary enrollment rate to be 20.5% in 1993/94, with more than 50% of students either dropping out or repeating before completing Grade 3 (*Education in Ethiopia: Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable Progress*, World Bank, 2005).

The problem of low enrollment and retention at the primary school level was both a result of and compounded by numerous weaknesses in the primary education system. Teachers and school directors were inadequately trained. The curriculum was mostly irrelevant to people's lives. Teaching materials were largely unavailable. With a highly centralized education system, the public was not engaged in helping to improve education in their communities. Gender, regional, and ethnic disparities created severe inequities. For instance, traditional practices, such as early marriage arrangements for girls as young as nine years, prevented the majority of primary school-aged girls from accessing an education.



BEST AVAILABLE

Education in Ethiopia in the Late 20th Century



- 20.5% national primary school enrollment rate, much less for girls
- Less than 50% reaching Grade 3 due to high repetition and dropping out.

The decentralization of the education system by the GOE to the RSEBs posed additional challenges for an already overburdened and under-resourced education system. Responsibility for delivering educational services was shifted from the national to the regional level in the early 1990s and to the sub-regional levels (i.e., the *woredas*) in 2002. However, there was a severe lack of institutional, human, and financial resources at the lower levels of government to assume this new responsibility. In addition to a lack of resources, the challenges at the local levels of government were compounded by poor communication and transportation infrastructure, and insufficient planning and management capacity to collect and analyze data needed for informed policy and implementation decisions.

In 1994, USAID, in close consultation with the MoE, commissioned a comprehensive research study to: refine its understanding of educational needs; identify strategies for achieving and sustaining improvements in access to, quality of, and equity in basic education; and streamline USAID's support to the education sector. The study concluded that isolated inputs or interventions would be ineffective. No less than a total transformation of the entire basic education system in Ethiopia was required.



Discussion at the National Education Assessment in 1994.

BESO: A Brief History

In response to the findings of this study on the state of primary education in Ethiopia, in 1994, USAID launched the Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) to assist the GOE's efforts to transform and modernize primary education in Ethiopia. BESO I, as it is often referred to, was a seven-year cooperative effort by the GOE and USAID to improve primary education in Ethiopia, with operations both at the national level and in the Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR) Regions. The purpose of BESO I was to improve the quality and equity of primary education.

During the second phase beginning in 2002, the Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO), more commonly known as BESO II, limited its focus to specific key elements of the system, but implemented activities on a nationwide scale. All nine regional education bureaus and two city administration education offices benefited from BESO II. The U.S. President's African Education Initiative (AEI), which began during BESO II, gave the project additional momentum and strength.

It is important to note that BESO was fully consonant with the MoE's national Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), which is developed every five years. During BESO I, USAID and the GOE agreed to establish a BESO management structure that brought together both parties, the BESO Central Coordinating Committee (BCCC). It was the highest body responsible for approving BESO plans and providing policy and operational guidance. The BESO Technical Working Group (BTWG) was the technical arm of the BCCC. The BTWG reviewed progress reports and plans of BESO, and provided suggestions to the BCCC on both policy and operational matters.

BESO's five program goals reflected the Ethiopian primary education sector's most dire needs. USAID's financial contribution, totaling approximately US\$150,000,000 (over 1.3 billion Birr at the current exchange rate), combined with its technical and managerial expertise, have helped the GOE to make remarkable progress toward these goals:

- 1) Improving the effectiveness of pre-service teacher training, helping institute an in-service teacher training program, and enhancing the quality and capacity of professional education personnel;
- 2) Creating a bond between parents, communities and government in support of schools and education through the strengthened capacity of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and local government;
- 3) Increasing the access and equity of education for all, and especially girls and other disadvantaged populations;
- 4) Streamlining the decentralized management and administration, increasing the efficiency of educational financing, and strengthening systems for managing personnel, instructional materials, and monitoring and evaluation;
- 5) Strengthening teacher-learner support systems to enhance quality.

During 1995-2005, BESO activities were implemented in a coordinated and collaborative manner by the following USAID partners:

The Academy for Educational Development (AED)

As USAID's institutional contractor, AED was responsible for building the capacity of Ethiopian educators and helping to enhance teacher development and strengthen the planning and management systems.

International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH)

IFESH--a United States-based charitable, private, organization--worked in 39 Ethiopian education institutions. To improve teacher education and training programs, IFESH has assigned 127 American volunteer teachers to TELs to work with their Ethiopian counterparts.

World Learning Incorporated (WLI)

As an international NGO, WLI was responsible for helping communities to increase the number of children, particularly girls, who were attending schools, and for helping communities increase both their willingness and their capacity to improve the quality of their schools. WLI administered grants in 1,800 schools in Amhara, SNNPR, and Benishangul-Gumuz during BESO II.

Save the Children U.S.

An international NGO, Save the Children U.S. was responsible for helping communities to increase the number of children, particularly girls, who were attending schools, and for helping communities increase both their willingness and their capacity to improve the quality of their schools. Save the Children administered grants in 1,500 schools in four regions: Afar, Gambela, Oromiya, and Somali during BESO II.

Tigray Development Association (TDA)

A local NGO, TDA was responsible for helping communities to increase the number of children, particularly girls, who were attending schools, and for helping communities increase both their willingness and their capacity to improve the quality of their schools. TDA administered grants in 400 schools in Tigray during BESO II.

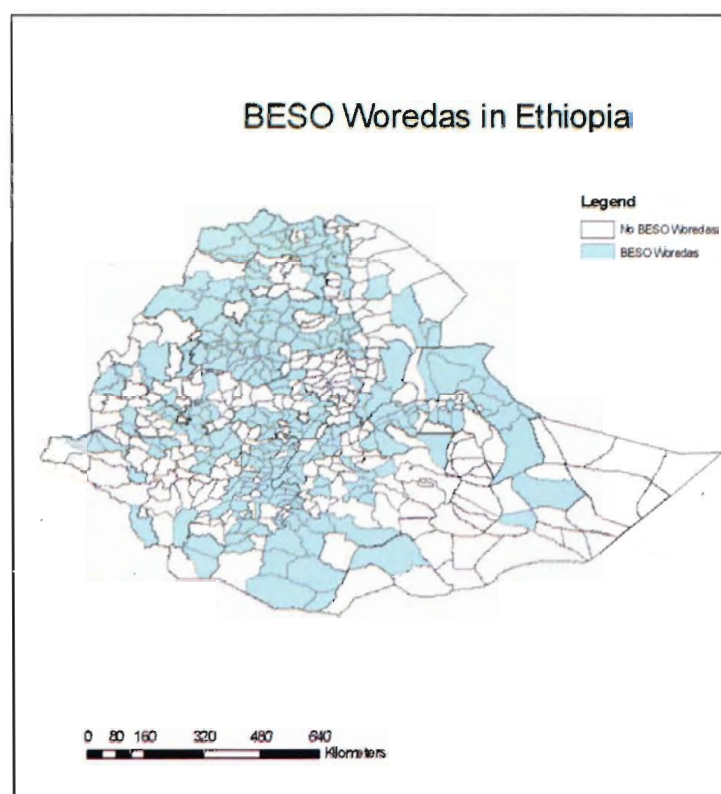
Pact

An international NGO, Pact was responsible for providing: 1) non-formal primary education to children especially girls and children from rural communities and pastoralist areas, 2) adult functional literacy in the same localities, and 3) capacity building to WEOs. Pact operated in 52 woredas in eight regions: Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Oromiya, SNNP, Somali, and Tigray.

UNESCO/International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)

A public international organization and UN agency, UNESCO worked to improve the quality of primary school teacher training through capacity building of teacher trainers at all public training institutes, colleges, and education facilities at Addis Ababa, Alemaya, and Debub Universities.

BESO: A Decade of Progress



During 1995-2005, remarkable progress was made towards each of the five BESO goals. BESO activities contributed significantly to the MoE's successful efforts to improve the quality and equity in primary education in Ethiopia. Some highlights, results, and illustrative success stories are provided below, grouped by each of BESO's five goals.

GOAL 1: Improving the effectiveness of pre-service teacher training, helping institute an in-service teacher training program, and enhancing the quality of professional education personnel

Because education quality depends so much on the quality of education personnel, at least 40% of BESO support was directed to pre-service and in-service teacher training activities during the last ten years. Working alongside the MOE, BESO developed a variety of strategies and programs to prepare teachers who are entering the workforce, as well as improving the skills and expanding the knowledge of existing teachers. The focus was on strengthening all Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and disseminating new learning-teaching processes to the primary schools nation-wide.

Pre-service Training

BESO provided much needed material support to the TEIs to improve their infrastructure, research and reference resources, as well as technical support through professional development of staff by on-site training and study tours. BESO's technical assistance to TEIs, universities, RSEBs, and the MOE included: the review of courses, curricula, and materials; the development of new education projects; and the mobilization of co-curricula programs.

To support pre- and in-service teacher training, BESO brought 127 American volunteer teachers to work with their Ethiopian counterparts. These volunteers, associated with the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH)—a United States-based charitable, private organization, established under the vision and leadership of the late Reverend Dr. Leon Howard Sullivan worked in 39 Ethiopian education institutions. IFESH's activities significantly improved teacher education and training programs with a

focus on addressing poor classroom practices, improving English language instruction, and responding to cross cutting issues such as gender disparities and HIV/AIDS prevention education. IFESH also provided text books, reference materials and CDs for primary schools totaling more than \$US 2.3 million.

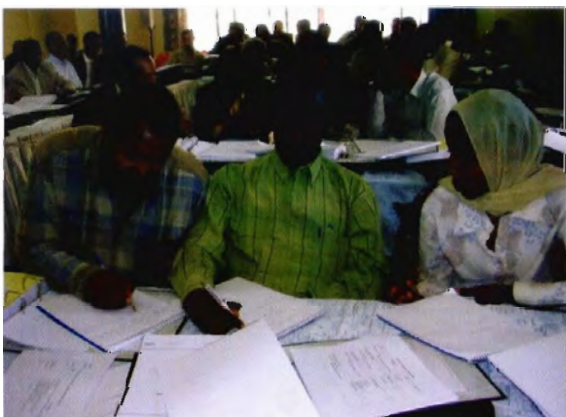


IFESH volunteer in a participatory English Classroom in Awassa

In-service Training

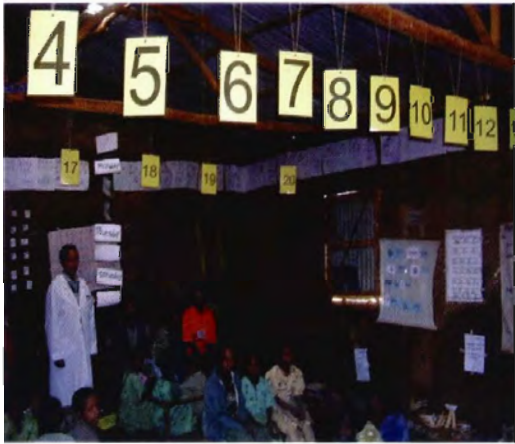
In-service teacher training in Ethiopia was developed using a number of diverse strategies. For example, to improve the support for and linkages among primary schools, an innovative school clustering system was created. Because of the remote nature of Ethiopia, many primary schools were isolated from one another and from their woreda (district) office. By "clustering" or creating small networks of 3-6 schools, it became possible to offer more regular and effective support to even the most remote primary schools in the country. Primary school teachers could more easily take advantage of in-service training opportunities offered at the cluster resource center, or head school, which is centrally located for logistical reasons. BESO's activities targeted more than 300 of these cluster resource centers through the provision of resources (e.g. books,

duplicating machines, typewriters) that were then shared with their satellite schools. With BESO and other donors' support, a site-based cluster in-service approach was developed that enabled teachers to work in their own schools as part of their in-service training with trainers periodically visiting the schools to provide support.



Teacher in-service training program at a cluster resource center.

In addition to school cluster resource centers, Woreda cluster resource centers (WCRC) were also established under BESO, and several began functioning independently. These centers supported school cluster activities, as well as provided frequent and diverse in-service training activities for primary school educators from their respective woredas. BESO provided material and financial support to 16 WCRCs.



Megib and her active learning class

Distance education was another strategy for providing in-service training to primary education personnel. BESO trained a core group of distance education specialists to provide in-service training programs. BESO also provided professional development support in all regions to a core group of distance education professionals who, in turn, trained tutors, course writers, media program producers and center coordinators. The USAID funded UNESCO distance education program provided continuing education to more than 120 trainees drawn from the MoE's departments and agencies, RSEBs, and TEIs. These educators were trained at two levels: Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and Masters of Arts in Distance Education (MADE). Sixty-four candidates graduated and 45 of the PGDDE graduates were admitted to the MADE program for further study.

Megib: Pioneer in introducing model classroom

Megib teaches Grade 1 students in Defecha elementary school, Amhara region. Defecha is a rural school. There is no vehicle access so at 7 a.m. each morning Megib and her colleagues set off on the hour long walk to the school. Defecha School is high up in the hills surrounding Gondar and the walk is a long steep climb along a difficult path. The school itself is on a plateau and the views of the surrounding mountains are stunning. There are no toilets, water or electricity at the school. Many of the children walk for up to one hour each day to school.

Megib attended a number of BESO workshops on developing and using teaching aids and different instructional media and student centered teaching methods at the Gondar College of Teacher Education. As a result, Megib's classroom is now full of instructional media such as letters and numbers, stapled into the mud walls and hanging from the rafters. The furniture in her classroom is poor. There are no tables for the children to work on and only narrow, uncomfortable benches on which to sit, but Megib has arranged the children into groups and they enjoy working together using the small blackboards made by Megib for each of them at one of the college workshops.

Megib is an excellent role model and is beginning to share her knowledge with other teachers in Defecha helping them to establish their own model classrooms.

Centers of Excellence, based at TEIs, are yet another strategy under BESO to provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers. Currently there are three:

1. Assela Teacher Education College: This Center of Excellence provides specialized training in developing teaching aids for primary schools. Teachers visiting the Center receive training in this field. The Center trainers also visit schools to set up local facilities and train teachers on-site. This Center also has a

computerized resource center and a library. A mobile library delivers books and other materials to schools for in-service teacher training.

2. Debre Birhan Vocational and Teachers College: This Center of Excellence supports the production of supplementary teaching materials.
3. Jijiga Teacher Training Institute: The third Center of Excellence supports training of facilitators of Alternative Basic Education for the nomadic/pastoralist population.

BESO aims to replicate these three Centers in other TEIs in the coming years.

Women Teacher Support

The Women Teacher Support (WTS) component of BESO significantly strengthened support systems for female teachers and students, by developing programs, which increased the chances of women teachers for promotion into leadership positions. It helped female teachers reach leadership positions in the system through well designed capacity building and mentoring programs. The WTS developed and distributed over 30,000 training modules to schools, TEIs, and regional and woreda education offices.



Women teachers in leadership training

Highlights of Results under Goal 1

- Library assistance: English language books and reference and resource materials worth \$US 4 million were distributed to Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs), Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), schools, and cluster resource centers throughout the country.
- IFESH's capacity building in teacher education has directly benefited 49,811 Ethiopian students, teachers and community members.
- The following have participated in BESO-supported training activities:
 - 63,390 primary school teachers
 - 10,660 School Directors
 - 3,256 Woreda Education Officers
- BESO also provides extensive support to teachers through TEIs' linkage program with cluster center schools, with 11,926 teachers from 495 schools participating.
- The distance education program, funded through BESO, targeted 21,400 teachers; 60% of the candidates successfully completed their education diploma, which qualified them to teach Grades 5-8.

GOAL 2: Creating a bond between parents, communities and government in support of schools and education through the strengthened capacity of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and local government

Throughout the first decade of BESO, building strong relations between schools and community members was a core strategy in the broader context of democratization, decentralization, citizen participation, and community responsibility in Ethiopia.

Community-Government Partnership Program (CGPP)

During BESO I, the Community School Grants/Activity Program (CSGP/CSAP) was implemented in two regions--Tigray and Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). This small grants activity helped to strengthen the capacity of School Management Committees (SMCs), the predecessor to Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), to enable them to manage their school's development. A total of 1,400 schools benefited from this activity. SMCs, comprised of parents and other community members, were responsible for the management of the development of the local primary school.

During BESO II (2002-2007), the program was renamed the Community-Government Partnership Program (CGPP), and was expanded to six new regions (Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Oromia, and Somali) for a total of eight regions. The SMCs were replaced by PTAs. The Kebele Education and Training Boards (KETBs), a liaison between the WEOs and the PTAs, was created to ensure better collaboration between these two levels.

The CGPP issued school incentive awards, or small grants, to help PTAs implement self-directed activities to improve the physical, psychosocial, and economic structures of their schools. For example, grants were used for the construction of classroom blocks, libraries, and latrines. However, PTAs also used the grants for starting up income-generation activities, such as tearooms, school shops, raising livestock, and water mills, to build additional resources for the community's schools. For example, one PTA received over Birr 300,000 or \$US 35,000 from a neighboring malt factory to construct additional classrooms and renovate other school facilities. The CGPP approach was so well received that some RSEBs used the same strategy to leverage resources for other non-BESO schools.



The CGPP reached 3,700 out of the more than 16,000 primary schools in the

BESO Water Mill

The Zuma River surrounds Afsa School in Awi zone. For ten years the school tried to use the river for irrigation and to generate income, but was unable to do so due to lack of materials and motivation by the community. After the school was involved in BESO's CGPP, however, there was renewed commitment by the community to build a water mill. The KETB and PTA were successful at mobilizing the community, students and teachers to dig 400 meters of drainage channels, contribute money, and provide raw materials for the mill's construction. At present, the local community uses this water mill rather than others far away. It also became a dependable source of income for the local primary school.

country. In addition, the CGPP supported alternative basic education for children in disadvantaged circumstances.

Through the CGPP, communities are empowered to take action on their children's and their school's behalf. As the mid-term evaluation of the CGPP concluded: "It is clear that the project is working in all communities visited, that communities are exerting ownership of the schools, that PTAs/KETBs are exerting financial management of the schools, that communities are raising funds to match and go beyond the amounts provided by the SIA grants, that girls' enrollment is increasing and dropouts are decreasing, and that schools have or are creating sustainability plans to be implemented as the project ends." ("Mid-term Evaluation: BESO II Community Government Partnership Program: Final Report", Juarez & Associates, 2005). These findings support the argument that the CGPP's implementation significantly improved both quality and equity in targeted primary schools.

Based in part on the impact of the CGPP, several RSEBs are planning to incorporate community capacity building into the responsibilities of school supervisors.

Girls Education Advisory Committee (GEAC)

Another community structure created by the CGPP was the Girls Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), or the Girls Advisory Committee (GAC), a committee that works in collaboration with the PTA. Comprised of teachers, students, parents and influential community members, GEACs were tasked with creating a more positive school and home environment for girls in an attempt to increase girls' access to and completion of primary school. This was accomplished through awareness raising training and by implementing a wide range of projects, each with a specific goal designed to (a) enable girls to stay in school, (b) reduce the likelihood that girls will drop out, and (c) encourage girls to return to school if they do drop out. The GEAC modality was adopted by several RSEBs to serve in all schools in their regions, including non-BESO schools.



Girls rescued from arranged marriages by the GAEC

Tajab School GEAC: A twist in a tale

December is harvest time for many Teff (Ethiopia's staple grain) growing areas and is also the month of marriage proposals and ceremonies. It was in this month that Meseret, a fourteen year-old girl in Grade 3, along with six other girls from Tajab School, Gojam, were proposed to. Their parents accepted the marriage proposals despite the girls' protests. The school's GEAC intervened but was unable to persuade the girls' parents to cancel the engagements and to keep the girls in school. The committee lobbied the WEO and the Women's Affairs Office to intervene, but to no avail. As their last option, the GEAC approached the groom and informed him that Meseret did not wish to marry, that she was under-aged and that their marriage would not be legally or morally right.

Sedeta is a cultural practice where the groom visits his future wife's home to provide the dowry money to her parents. The day for "Sedeta" arrived. However, the groom never arrived at Meseret's house. When he was asked why he did not come, he replied that he agreed with the GEAC that forcing young girls into marriage and disrupting their education is a crime. Therefore, he decided not to marry Meseret, who shortly thereafter returned to school.

Highlights of Results under Goal 2

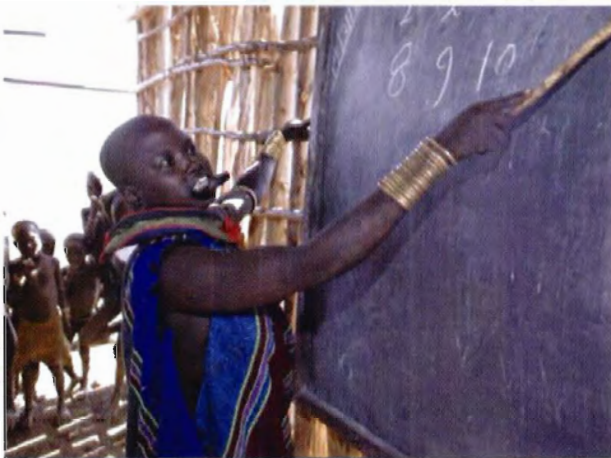
- The CGPP reached 5,100 (1,400 in BESO I and 3,700 in BESO II) out of the more than 16,000 primary schools in the country.
- 41,783 Parent teacher association (PTA) members, school directors, KETB members, and woreda and zone education officers were trained
- One region in Ethiopia launched an initiative, "One School, One Project" that reflects the CGPP approach. For every project a school proposes, the RSEB provides up to 10% of the support needed for its completion. As a result, more than 90 million Birr was raised during the year.
- One RSEB institutionalized the GAC throughout its region by replicating this community structure in all of its primary schools BESO and non-BESO alike.

GOAL 3: Increasing the access and equity of education for all, and especially girls and other disadvantaged populations

Access

In 2002 and 2003, poor rainfall caused significant crop failure in rain-dependent agricultural areas, affecting up to 14 million people. Education programs in Ethiopia were seriously affected by the drought, with significant drops in school enrollment and children reporting to school with illnesses that hindered their participation in educational activities. A special project entitled Complementary Drought Assistance (CDA) was developed to address this need, and with nearly 60 million Birr (US\$7 million), 153,432 children in 362 primary schools in 6 regions of Ethiopia benefited from school feeding, provision of education materials and infrastructure rehabilitation for the schools.

In 2002, the Southern Tier Initiative was launched to address the needs of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Southern Ethiopia. The initiative was aimed at increasing pastoral communities income, adoption of family health practices, access to basic education, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Non-formal basic education centers, community schools, and mobile schools were established in southern parts of Ethiopia where formal schools were unrealistic.



In order to enhance access to the most disadvantaged, in 2004, an alternative basic education program (ABE) for children and adults was launched in 52 woredas that are inhabited by pastoralist and highlanders in remote areas of Ethiopia with the aim of reaching 500,000 children and adults by 2009. This program, which targeted 52 disadvantaged woredas, included women

A Mursi girl in ABE center working on numbers

empowerment activities. In several regions, the CGPP also established alternative/non-formal education (NFE) programs, using community-assisted facilitators, in order to bring education to communities that had previously been overlooked. The curricula in these schools featured accelerated learning, so that at some point students in these schools could enter regular government schools. In a number of locales, the community schools matured to the point that they could petition for inclusion in the formal educational system. In addition, each of the CGPP partners implemented a variety of NFE-type programs in their operational regions.

Equity

As described under Goal 2, BESO's core gender strategy was the formation of GEACs/GACs to proactively support girls' access to and completion of primary education in Ethiopia. These community-based committees varied among regions, but generally, their membership included female students and teachers, mothers, and in some cases, male students. The GEAC/GAC supported the school's student population, especially girls, by encouraging them to report issues of concern such as early marriage, abduction, and sexual harassment. The GEAC/GAC succeeded in bringing attention to the specific needs of girls, as well as creating communication channels between girls and supportive adults (e.g., parents, teachers, government officials). In addition, the GEAC/GAC provided girls with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities to build skills, provide time and space to develop talents, foster cooperation, and enable hobbies and pursuits of interests outside of school.

The Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program (AGSP), supported through the AEI, was one of the programs that helped enhance girls' education at the secondary level.

The program targeted girls, who demonstrated strong academic performance in primary school but were in need of assistance to complete a secondary education. The scholarship component included tuition, lodging, tutorial services, school kits, and school clubs. This highly successful program is relevant to BESO in that it is producing important role models for primary school-aged girls throughout the country.



AGSP girls from Menelik and Yekatit 12 secondary schools in Addis Ababa

My name is Segenet Wendawok. I was born in Gojam, Ethiopia. When I was five years old, my father remarried after the death of my mother, and my stepmother did not like me. I left home and went to my aunt. Although my aunt objected to my attending school, I succeeded in reaching grade 8, but things got very difficult since my aunt's husband started abusing me. Things were so hard that I decided to quit school and move away. I had just made this decision when the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship program provided me with a ray of hope. I succeeded in completing my secondary education with distinction with the help of the scholarship; and now hope to major in tourism management. What I have learned from life is that if you are patient and able to endure the suffering around you, eventually you can succeed!



Segenet Wendawok thanking the AGSP

Highlights of Results under Goal 3

- *There was a 40% increase in primary school enrollment in drought affected areas as a result of the Complementary Drought Assistance (CDA) in 2003.*
- *Current gross enrollment at the primary level is 80% (compared to 20.5% in 1993/94).*
- *In the last ten years, 2,380 girls have benefited from the AGSP, including the 1,000 currently receiving the scholarship*

GOAL 4: Streamlining the decentralized management and administration, improving educational planning, and strengthening systems for managing personnel, instructional materials, and monitoring and evaluation.

As the GOE strives to achieve universal primary education by 2015, the demand for more effective and efficient planning, management, and information systems became urgent. To help meet this demand, BESO focused on strengthening planning and management systems at all levels of the education sector.

BESO-supported activities included the introduction of computers to improve management efficiencies and enhance policy and planning in RSEBs, as well as the installation of a computer LAN at the regional levels and the MoE. Application software packages were developed to improve planning and management in RSEBs and TEIs. Hundreds of education officers were trained in different computer applications, and new computerized systems for personnel and financial management were introduced.

To increase the pool of qualified education planners and managers, BESO initiated a M.Ed. Distance Education program in education planning and management. This program was the first of its kind in the country and was successfully implemented in collaboration with the MoE and Addis Ababa University.

One of the gaps in educational planning at all levels was integrating the planning and budgeting processes. Targets used to be set with little connection to the resources needed to achieve them. BESO introduced a computer-based Integrated Planning, Budgeting, and Control System (IPBCS) to overcome this critical gap. IPBCS was tried down to the woreda level in Tigray. This exercise was important not only to the education sector, but to other sectors as well. For the country lacked expertise in integrating planning and budgeting, as well as ensuring the participation of lower administrative levels in these processes. The IPBCS promoted accountability of and responsiveness to the decentralization of the planning and budgeting processes. We hope other regions would also adopt it.

BESO supported planning, policy development, and decentralized management through workshops, national studies, and by helping establish information management systems like those mentioned above. Other examples included the improvement of the MoE data program (EDDAT) and education indicators, as well as the development of a "What-if" simulation software (projection model) as an educational planning tool. Other major

contributions included:

- new software for the Records and Archives Office and new accounting software for the office that manages donor funding;
- a networking system at the Education Media Agency (EMA) and the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR);
- the computer network at the National Organization for Examinations (NOE);
- a computerized school mapping program in SNNPR and Tigray.

BESO provided financial and technical assistance for the first two National Learning Assessments (NLAs) in Ethiopia, which generated information on the performance of the educational system and served as the basis for policy reform options. These studies, measuring student learning in English, Mathematics and Science, allowed for comparisons of achievement across schools, woredas, zones, and regions. The NLAs led to the identification of key inputs and process factors likely to contribute to achievement and, therefore, helped to address the disparities among primary schools.

Finally, enhancing information technology was one of the main strategies to improve the quality of primary education during BESO's first ten years. Using desktop publishing to produce curriculum materials, for example, RSEBs' curriculum departments and teacher training institutions were able to develop camera-ready copies of textbooks and other instructional materials.

Highlights of Results under Goal 4

- *Hundreds of education officers were trained in computer applications for planning and management.*
- *180 educators graduated from the M.Ed. Distance Education program in education planning and management.*
- *Nearly 3,270 woreda officials received specialized training in educational planning and management.*
- *All 630 woredas were given the opportunity to develop 15-year educational plans and investments.*
- *PMIS is installed in all REBs, MoE and 30 woredas and training is provided on how to use it effectively.*
- *MMIS is installed in MOE and 75% of the REBs and training is provided to users.*

GOAL 5: Strengthening teacher-learner support systems to enhance quality

To strengthen teacher-learner support systems, BESO supported the development of teachers' self-instructional kits. The kits contained active learning methods, assessment techniques, teaching aids preparation using locally available materials, classroom management techniques, HIV/AIDS awareness, and methods for creating a child-friendly learning environment. In addition, supplementary and socially pertinent curriculum materials on HIV/AIDS, civics, and environmental education were produced for Grades 5-8. The materials also provided practical ideas, suggestions, and activities to enable teachers to integrate new strategies and methods to stimulate active learning in their classroom for more effective learning.

During the last decade, BESO played a leading role in introducing Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) into the education system. The IRI consisted of radio lessons that allowed pupils to learn and apply relevant knowledge and ideas that relate to everyday life situation. After training in IRI, teachers used radio instruction to deliver daily English lessons in Grades 1 and 2. Performance evaluations revealed a 22.4 point improvement between the pre- and post-tests for the IRI groups compared to a 9.8 point improvement for the students who did not benefit from the IRI. Since the evaluation results were encouraging, BESO has helped the MoE to expand the IRI to grades 3 and 4. Currently, pupils in grades 1- 4 in all regions of the country are benefiting from the program.

One example of IRI was "Radio Mustaqbal" (Radio of our Future), which broadcasted to the Somali regional state half-hour literacy lessons, as well as stories related to conflict resolution and prevention, health, the recurring drought , and civics--all packaged into entertaining dramas. The project, implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC), worked closely with the Somali RSEB to train local scriptwriters, desktop publishers, and digital producers. Local Somali musicians and actors developed the lessons, designed to assist teachers with little training and few materials. The transmitted lessons reflected the diversity of the northern and southern areas of the Somali National Regional State (SNRS).



Children in Somali region enjoying an IRI through Radio Mustaqbal

Highlights of Results under Goal 5

- 45,000 copies of teachers' self-instructional kits have been distributed to 11,303 primary schools.
- 35,000 copies of supplementary and socially relevant curriculum materials on HIV/AIDS, civics, and environmental education for Grades 5-8 were produced.
- Supported the printing of 1,625,844 copies of grades 4 and 5 textbooks.
- Provided 55,000 supplementary reading materials to primary schools
- There was a 22.4 point improvement between the pre- and post-tests for students participating in the IRI, compared with a 9.8 point improvement for the students who did not participate in this BESO-supported activity.

BESO: LOOKING AHEAD

The gross enrollment ratio at the primary school level reached 80% in 2004/2005. Engaging the remaining 20% will be the major challenge under the MoE's Third Education Sector Development Program (ESDP III) for the period 2005/2006 — 2009/2010. USAID will continue to support the MOE in its endeavors to enhance the quality and equity of primary education in Ethiopia. There are already a number of opportunities and constraints that have been identified for the future direction of BESO.

Opportunities

USAID will continue its support of a major ABE program for both children and adults. This will continue, with an initial emphasis on the remaining out-of-school children and subsequently, on functional literacy for adults.

Recently, the GOE expanded its higher education system. USAID hopes to work with the Ethiopian higher education institutions to establish partnerships between U.S. and Ethiopian universities, including the private institutes, to enable them to exchange experiences and resources. This might include the exchange of volunteer teachers, provision of textbooks and equipment, and other areas of support.

In recent years, USAID has been coordinating health and education activities at the community level. For example, the Kokeb Kebele Initiative (KKI), or Model Kebele Initiative (MKI), promotes the achievement of high impact health and education goals within the community. It focuses on key health and education interventions according to community priorities. KKI is being tested in 20 kebeles in the SNNPR While MKI is being piloted in another 20 kebeles in Amhara Region. The premise of KKI/MKI is that communities will have better health and education services if partners, including grassroots functionaries and development personnel from both sectors, work together to assess needs, plan initiatives and execute development activities and programs. USAID will continue to support this initiative.

USAID, working in partnership with the MOE, utilized HIV/AIDS funds to develop an age-appropriate HIV/AIDS syllabus for primary schools and incorporated HIV/AIDS into the formal school curricula in sciences and social studies. Social awareness of HIV/AIDS was promoted through the CGPP activities. Building on the lessons learned, USAID will expand the HIV/AIDS element of BESO in the future.

Under Goal 1, where part of the strategy was the empowerment of female teachers through the Women Teacher Support (WTS) program, issues impeding girls' primary education were identified and addressed. Women teachers organized themselves into Girls' Education Enhancing Committees at the school level throughout the country to help fight deep rooted harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage, which impede girls' access to and completion of primary school. This work on eliminating early marriage will continue to be important to enhancing equity in primary education in Ethiopia.

Constraints

Frequent turnover of staff and volunteers at all levels of the primary education system from the national level down to the PTA continues to plague capacity building efforts under BESO and other educational development programs. There is a dire and urgent need to address the causes of staff turnover in order to reduce it so that capacity building activities have a longer-term impact.

Related to this problem of staff turnover is the challenge of limited capacity that continues to persist at all levels of the education sector. While the commitment to improving primary education has increased in the last ten years, the transfer of knowledge is still difficult and slow.

An additional challenge has been the under-utilization of new computer resources, again at all levels of the sector. A lack of usage of computers by teachers and some educational planning and management personnel continues, despite various training programs undertaken. Limited resources for the repair and maintenance of recently computerized systems are also threatening the future use of these management and educational tools. This will need to be addressed in the coming years under BESO.

Final Words

During the last decade, USAID's support, through its BESO activities, made a significant impact on enhancing the quality and equity of primary education in Ethiopia. In the future, through the President's Africa Education Initiative, USAID will continue to help the MoE and RSEBs to consolidate, sustain and replicate the innovations and key achievements under BESO I and II, while continuing to support the objectives of ESDP III. To this end, the following areas will likely be the focus of the USAID's support to Ethiopia's primary education sector:

- ¥Strengthened linkages between the TEIs and primary schools in order to instill and sustain student-centered active learning methodologies in the schools;
- ¥Increased support for the regions to strengthen teacher support systems, especially their professional development;
- ¥Introduction of information communication technology in the national curricula and teacher education;
- ¥Expanded and strengthened Centers of Excellence at TEIs and increased dissemination of their expertise to regions, woredas and schools;
- ¥Expanded alternative basic education (ABE) for children and functional adult literacy for adults in the disadvantaged areas of the country;
- ¥Improvement in the school environment through strengthened school leadership and PTAs, including the expansion of CGPP capacity building initiatives to other schools and communities;
- ¥Strengthening the capacity of educational professionals at all levels;

- ¥New and strengthened existing tools and resources (computerized management systems, e-learning, etc.) to enable decentralized planning and management systems to function more effectively; and
- ¥Strengthened student progress assessment systems that are compatible with the new student-centered approaches to learning-teaching.

During the last ten years, USAID, through BESO, worked collaboratively with the GOE to help provide quality education in an equitable manner. Ten years in education development is a relatively short time, especially considering where Ethiopia was in terms of primary education at the close of the 20th century. Despite significant progress and achievements made under BESO I and II, there is still much to be done to improve primary education in Ethiopia. In partnership with the MoE, the RSEBs, communities and school leaders and other development partners, USAID will recommit itself to help Ethiopia meet its education development goals.



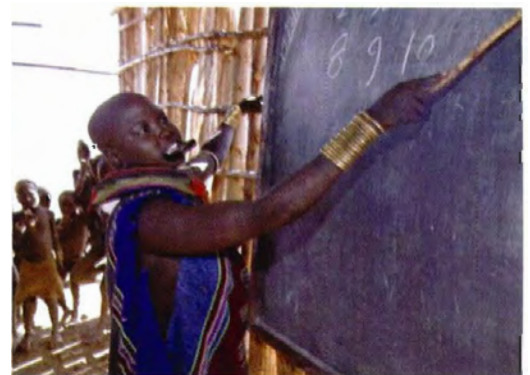
Megib and her active learning class



AGSP beneficiary student



Sept - 2005 TWG participants



A Mursi girl working on numbers
Photo by: Susan Liebold