



Ethiopia Reads' Special Report

March 2024



**Bring Hope and Cheer through Books:
Supporting Education in Emergencies for Internally Displaced
Persons and Those Affected by Conflicts Across Ethiopia**

A Growing Humanitarian Crisis Affecting 20 million people

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [reported](#) that there are now 4.4 million internally displaced persons (IDP) in Ethiopia and a total of 20 million in dire need due to the violent conflicts, security concerns and drought. An estimated 600,000 died as a result of the war in and around Tigray alone. Tens of millions of people's lives and livelihoods have been affected.

Ethiopia Reads' work has been primarily focused on our long-term strategic goals of supporting children's reading by providing libraries, books and associated training across the country. However, given the scale of the impacts, we decided to try to help alleviate this escalating educational crisis for millions of children who no longer have access to schools or books. Our Ethiopian staff, in particular, pushed the organization to explore what we could do for the affected populations.



Parents and children at an ER book distribution pilot project in Somali Region, 2021

We were in a unique position to reach and influence children and families through our long experience, relationships and expertise in working directly

with children, parents and educators across the country. We have access to stimulating and engaging books to keep their imaginations, hopes and dreams alive in dire circumstances through [Open Hearts Big Dreams](#), one of our longtime collaborating organizations which have published a wide selection of the attractive OHBD-RSG bilingual mother-tongue children's books.

In 2021, *Ethiopia Reads* took up the enormous task of getting books and training to many of the children affected by conflict with no education available, whether internally displaced persons, in conflict-affected communities without schools or in communities where schools had been damaged by conflict.



Families receiving Read-At-Home book distribution in Oromia Region, 2021

Project 1: Education in Emergency - Piloting Read-At-Home

In 2021, *Ethiopia Reads* began work with IDPs through funding from the World Bank's Read-At-Home initiative, a program designed during the pandemic as a method of providing resources directly to children unable to attend school, which we adapted to the circumstances of three major IDP sites.

Ethiopia Reads printed 45,000 illustrated storybooks* in multiple Ethiopian languages and gifted them to the children of 15,000 displaced families in displaced persons sites in Oromia, Amhara and the Somali Region. We obtained official approvals, identified suitable titles, created parent support materials and printed 45,000 books in 3 languages, packaged them attractively in packets of 3 titles for each family.

Working with the regional education bureaus and the IDP agencies, *Ethiopia Reads* originally identified four sites across Ethiopia. Then our staff physically delivered the books to 5,000 Somali-speaking families (1 site in Fafan), to 5,000 Afaan Oromo-speaking families (1 site in East Hararghe, Gursum) and to 5,000 Amharic-speaking families (1 site in North Shoa) and ran parent information sessions on encouraging reading at home. (Unfortunately, at the time, despite strong efforts, we were unable to reach sites in Tigray at that time because of the security situation.)

Within four weeks of being awarded the funding, *Ethiopia Reads'* staff had successfully completed the project. The World Bank described the project on its website as providing [“A Flashlight Beam of Hope”](#) to displaced Ethiopian children. After successfully completing this pilot project, we were excited to see if we could scale up the project and explored different channels for support, including raising funds directly from our supporters for another small project and seeking further funding from the World Bank for larger projects.

While we were raising funds for our own small project, we received news from the World Bank that funds had been allocated for two additional education in emergency projects.



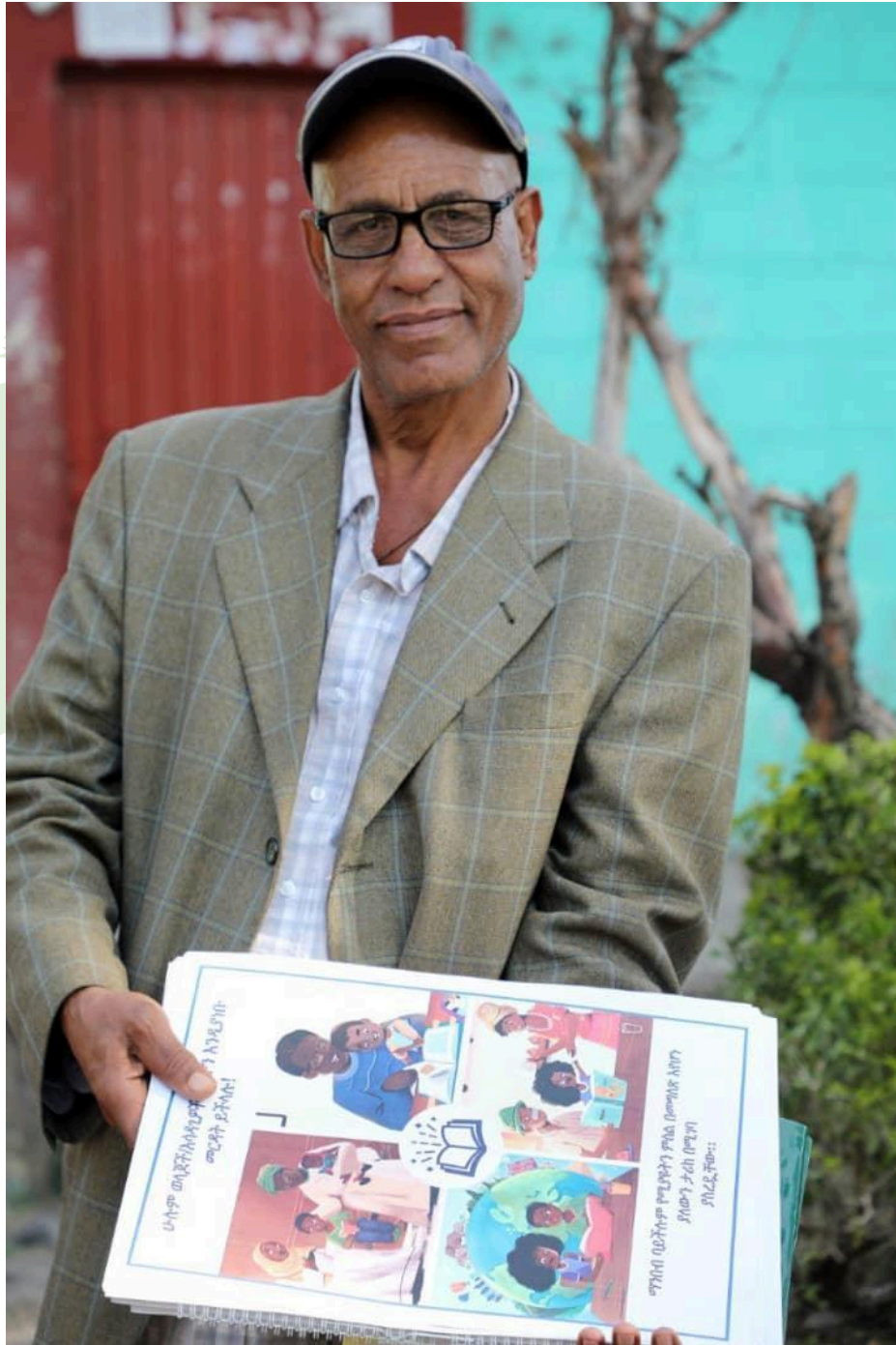
Children with SDAD Project books in Afar Region, 2024

Project 2: Storybooks For Young Readers In Conflict-Affected Areas (SDAD)

Currently, *Ethiopia Reads*, funded by the World Bank, is working with the Ministry of Education to help distribute books to families with children in 5 regions throughout Ethiopia: Afar, Amhara, Benishangul, Oromia and Tigray. Our team is implementing the SDAD Project by bringing hope and books to Ethiopian families in dire need. We have already printed and are distributing 80,000 books in 5 languages and training 40 local educational leaders in these communities to support and encourage parents to engage their children in reading. These early readers are bilingual books in both a local language and English published by *Open Heart Big Dreams*.^{*} Like our first, Read-At-Home pilot project, we are also providing supporting materials for parents in local languages.

In the very difficult security situation in all of the regions, although we had printed the books in November 2023, we were unable to travel to undertake the distribution and training until February 2024. Our staff were recently working in South Wello in the Amhara Region in Kombolcha and Haike, followed by going to the Afar Region (Chifra and Adaa'r). The next locations

are Mekelle and Abiy Adi in Tigray. Finally, our staff will finish up in Oromia and Benishangul. We hope that the entire project will be completed by the end of May 2024.



SDAD training of key leaders in Amhara Region, 2024

Project 3: Bringing Book Banks to Those In Need



Ethiopia Reads' staff distributing SDAD books in Amhara Region, 2024

This year *Ethiopia Reads* expects to expand our work to print and distribute another 100,000 books* and provide training to other difficult-to-reach areas in Ethiopia. Instead of providing books directly to individuals, we will be creating book banks in communities that have had schools destroyed or damaged.



SDAD Training of Key Leaders in Afar Region, 2024

Like the two previous projects (Read-At-Home and SDAD), we plan to train educators and caregivers on supporting children’s reading. We are planning and applying our knowledge and know-how from the previous two projects to effectively implement the project in sensitive areas in the country. We expect this Book Bank project to be completed by the end of 2024 and will distribute a total of 200,000 to 250,000 books.



Training caregivers in Afar Region, 2024

We are proud that *Ethiopia Reads* is making a big difference using all our unique experience, know-how and relationships for some of the millions of children with disrupted lives, no access to education and not a book to read!



Our staff at the end of a successful training and book distribution in Afar Region, 2024

**Open Hearts Big Dreams, one of our collaborating organizations, worked with the Ethiopia Reads team to prepare the OHBD-RSG bilingual books Ethiopia Reads distributed to IDP families. More info at ohbd-rsgbooks.com.*

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