



**PROCEEDINGS OF  
THE THIRD ANNUAL NATIONAL CHILDREN'S READING SUMMIT**



**“Early Childhood Development in Reading”**

**September 22-23, 2022  
Sapphire Addis Hotel  
Addis Ababa**

**PROCEEDINGS OF**  
**THE THIRD ANNUAL NATIONAL CHILDREN’S READING SUMMIT**  
**ORGANIZED BY ETHIOPIA READS**

**Theme: “Early Childhood Development in Reading”**



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**Ethiopia Reads staffs, Board of Directors and Volunteers**

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## Acronym

AAU	-----	Addis Ababa University
CTE	-----	Colleges of Teachers' Education
CSO	-----	Civil Society Organizations
CPD	-----	Continuous Professional Development
ER	-----	Ethiopia Reads
UN ECA	-----	United Nations-Economic Commissions for Africa
EDRMC	-----	Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission
EGRA	-----	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FWR	-----	Familiar Words Reads
GEQIP	-----	General Education Quality Improvement Program
IBBY	-----	International Board on Books for Young
IDP	-----	Internally Displaced Population
IWR	-----	Invented Words Reading
PSTA	-----	Parent Student Teacher Association
SRM	-----	School's Reading Materials
MOE	-----	Ministry of Education
MT	-----	Mother Tongue
NALA	-----	National Archives and Library Agency
RC	-----	Reading Comprehension

## Executive Summary

As part of its mission to create a culture of reading and to help empower and strengthen communities through the teaching and learning of reading in Ethiopia, Ethiopia Reads (ER) has been organizing the Annual National Children's Reading Summits since 2019 to deliberate on timely issues related to reading and literacy. This year, it has organized The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Children's Reading Summit under the theme dubbed "Early Childhood Development in Reading" from September 22 – 23, 2022 in Addis Ababa.

The two days summit had brought together more than 200 participants from the government, non-government organizations and the private sector. Government representatives attended the summit came from different ministries and offices including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa

University, Debre Birhan University as well as private universities and colleges. Partners from The World Bank, Civil Society Organizations, professional associations, as well as representatives from Addis Ababa Sub Cities, schools, the bank sector, investors, local community the media and concerned individuals have also joined the gathering.



The summit included presentations (in-person as well as recorded video presentations from partners who couldn't attend in person), panel discussion, experience sharing through question and answer session, recognition sessions and feedback at the end. The remarkable session at the summit was a recognition program that paid appreciation for people who have committed their lives for promoting reading culture. In this category seven individuals, Reverend Moges Mekonnen, Ass/Prof Dereje Gebre, Ato Kebede G/Medhin (teacher), Mary Jaffar, Comedian Asres Bekele, Ato Daniel Worku and Ato Hailemeleket Mewael were awarded recognition certificates.

It was suggested that all sectors should collaborate and strength the effort towards reading and literacy. Thus, Ministry of Education as well as those who work directly with children and education sector should work together to bring a significant change. And that the next summit should include more policy makers, government and non-government organizations working on reading. It should also include influential people including artists.

## Opening Session

The Opening Session included Welcoming Speech, Opening Remark, Keynote Speech as well as presentation on ER program updates and accomplishments.

### **Welcoming Speech**

*Ms. Yemisrach Worku,*

*Country Director of Ethiopia Reads*



The Country Director of Ethiopia Reads, Director Ms. Yemisrach Worku greeted and welcomed participants to the Ethiopia Reads 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Children's Reading Summit. She underscored that the Summit under the theme entitled "Early Childhood Development in Reading" would focus on the importance of a reading culture in the country which she lamented that the reading culture in the nation is very low. She stressed that ER is striving to create a culture of reading in Ethiopia by facilitating the establishment of libraries to children, providing support to libraries, and also facilitating trainings for librarians and educators. She underlined that in order to see all children in the country having the opportunity to grow up physically and emotionally as well as having a strong sense and self-esteem through reading, such kinds of summits which brought together various key stakeholders to confer on early childhood development in reading is crucial. She urged all participants to effectively participate in the meeting so as to curb challenges and forward solutions to nurture a conducive culture of reading. She hoped the Summit will be a good opportunity to create all insightful deliberations and a great knowledge sharing and networking experience among the key actors.

## **Introductory Remark**

*Mr. Malcom Clark,  
Board Chairperson of Ethiopia  
Reads*

Mr. Malcom Clark, Board Chairperson of ER noted that Ethiopia Reads has been working in Ethiopia for the last two decades mostly on children reading practices outside the classroom as well

as providing training to librarians and provision of books to libraries. He however acknowledged that the ER contribution on promoting reading among children is achieving good results, yet poor reading is among the greatest challenges the country is facing on creating a knowledge-based society. Thus, he underlined the importance of establishing a forum to address the problem. Mr. Clark recognized the nation's huge investment on education; nonetheless he lamented the nation's reading outcome being poor. He urged a comprehensive strategically intervention to tackle such critical hurdle. He also cautioned that poor education would undermine children's education outcome as well as their economic and life choices. Mr. Clark also attributed poor library services, lack of access to children's books and lack of progressive publishing industry among the contributing factors for the poor and underdeveloped of reading culture in Ethiopia.

Mr. Clark characterized the circumstance a "silent and invisible emergency". He urged all relevant actors working in the education sector to give priority for such critical issue and to work on synergy by creating a conducive networking system. Mr. Clark remarked that "the reason we want to invest our quite limited resource is we do realize that our work connects with other people and to try and bring together the Ethiopian professional community around children's reading." While concluding his opening remark, Mr. Clark welcomed all participants and wished a fruitful deliberation that would contribute to mitigate the challenge and help to promote a reading culture.







## **Opening Speech**

*Mr. Mezgebu Biyazen,  
Director of Executives for  
Strategic Affairs, F.D.R.E.  
Ministry of Education*

Mr. Mezgebu Biyazen commenced his speech by noting that Ethiopia is striving to promote reading culture to produce a society

that thinks logically and acknowledges the importance of participation of his office in such summit. Mr. Mezgebu disclosed that currently more than 30 million students are attending their education. Mr. Mezgebu noted that the ultimate objective is to create a society that thinks logically and investing in children education is the key to materialize the stated goal. He also lamented that the reading practice in the country is at its infant stage, especially in the lower grades. Thus, Mr. Mezgebu noted that the current reform program being undertaken by the government gives priorities on pre- formal education as part of the reform program. He recognized the significant efforts and contribution of Ethiopia Reads over the last two decades to support children reading even in areas that are hit by natural and man-made disasters. While winding his opening speech, he urged parents to enhance children reading skills and officially opened the Summit.

## **Ethiopia Reads Program Updates and Accomplishments**

*Mr. Birhanu Girma, Program Coordinator, ER*

Mr. Birhanu Girma, Program Coordinator of Ethiopia Reads presented a status report on ER's accomplishments so far as an update. Mr. Birhanu said that ER is striving to promote children reading skill by investing on libraries, investing on children reading habit from early childhood period and to implement this ER is doing to create a favorable reading venue for children. ER has been providing inputs and trainings to existing libraries and establishing community libraries in different

areas such as in Addis Ababa and Hawassa. The Program Coordinator briefed the gathering that more than 80 mobile libraries have been opened in different areas of Ethiopia for reading service with provision of books and other equipment and provision of library service training to teachers and school management teams among others. The Gebeta Library summer camp program that was conducted last summer in Addis Ababa and Hawassa was one of the big achievements of ER that attracted 150 students and 55 students respectively, parents and volunteers, remarked Mr. Birhanu. He added that the Donkey and Horse mobile library program operating in remote parts of Ethiopia introduced early reading habit and basic literacy targeting more than 1500 students between 2021/22. This intervention is being undertaken in three villages of Kembata Zone noted, Mr. Birhanu. He underlined that the librarian discussion and group meeting are serving as platforms for librarians to discuss challenges, success stories and way out to provide better library service in their respective locations and recognized the ER book support program being undertaken.

He also disclosed that so far more than 140,000 books were donated and in addition to this ER purchased locally published books that are distributed to



different schools in Ethiopia. It was also learnt that ER also donated more than 13,000 books and organized the children reading section of Abrehot Library and ER also published and distributed bi-lingual books in six languages such as Amharic, Oromifa, Somali, Tigrigna, Dizigna and Tembarisa combining with illustration and English language. ER also donated more than 45,000 books in IDP areas including in Amhara, Somali and Oromia regions. The project which is supported by World Bank will help traumatized children to become stable and lead normal life, underlined Mr. Birhanu. Attractive Books that are previously published but disappeared from the Ethiopian market were also reprinted by the support of ER and five story books were chosen and republished each with 5,000 copies.

Mr. Birhanu also said that ER is working to promote reading digitally to address students and parents how to train them in child reading by using role model and so far ER has reached more than 51,000 online communities. Arranging catalog is also underway to provide more information and analysis about children book in Ethiopia, reported the Project Coordinator. It was also disclosed to the gathering that ER also hosted numerous reading events and residential libraries in various areas of the country, in which the recently conducted was in Hawassa city, which Mr. Birhanu distinguished it as exemplary. Mr. Birhanu finally commended the ER volunteers and stakeholders for supporting and contributing to the mission of the organization.

## Keynote Remark

*Mr. Yikunnoamlak Mezgebu,  
National Archives and  
Library Archives*

Mr. Yikunnoamlak, from the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA's) started his remark by recognizing the appropriate



moment to direct the education of a person is during his early childhood. He then described a metaphor comparing a child with a wind, in which he noted that the child is just like the wind neither control the direction nor the speed at which he/she moves. Very great care should therefore be taken while selecting the materials that we import/translate, he underlined. He added that childhood period is formative period to acquaint children with comprehensive reading skill, practicing rhythm and truisms and early mathematics in religious centers. "This is a period where the fate of the child is decided and what we sow is what we will be harvested in later years" said Yikunnoamlak. He cautioned that early childhood period must be properly managed; and much work is needed in children reading. He, however, urged the need to exert the utmost care in selecting donated books with local cultural proximity and must be edited taking cultural contexts.

## DAY-1: PRESENTATION



### **Building the Foundation for Early Reading Success**

*Dr. Laurie Curtis, Literacy and Education Consultant /BOD member/, Ethiopia Reads*

Dr. Laurie Curtis, Literacy and Education Consultant, member of Board of Directors for Ethiopia Reads informed the gathering as she is delighted to take part in the Summit. She then described the purpose of her presentation as it would introduce the theoretical foundation for reading acquisition and brain structures utilized in reading; also tried to identify the importance of language in early years as the basis for learning to read and also tries to examine early childhood practices that can increase student engagement in reading and bring benefit to future reading achievement.

On her pictorial presentations, Dr. Curtis showed which parts of the brain controlled/allowed which language learning activities, thereby indicating that the more parts of the brain are made to play, the better and quicker meaningful communication can be achieved. Dr. Curtis described that Broca's Area, the Left Frontal Lobe, is responsible for speech production and language processing and the Wernicke's area, Temporal Lobe, is responsible for comprehension of written/spoken language, and the Angular Gyrus, Parietal Lobe, and connects visual input with language.

She noted that a lot of times children can read words but not understand what the word means and it takes both parts of the reading process to achieve skilled reading. Dr. Curtis added that the explicit teaching of reading, decoding the print or language comprehension starts at birth and tabular words

emanates when the child first comes to the world and language structure and how are sentences are structured and put together with whatever language that is spoken begins when parents first start to talk with the child.

Verbal reasoning, making sense and negotiating language is part of that as well as literacy knowledge further explained Dr. Curtis. “What we have done in school needs to be done very explicitly and well” said Laurie adding that that must be facilitated by families before the child gets to school, she remarked. She also categorized language in to two parts; Receptive and Expressive. While Receptive includes listening to stories, stories, looking at pictures and observing, the Expressive encompasses telling stories, singing songs, writing stories, drawing pictures and describing, Dr. Curtis explained.

Dr. Curtis discussed as there are Multiple Vocabularies, in which she said Listening Vocabulary (R)- Words meant what we have heard and attached to meaning. This builds the foundation for the words that we say, she noted. Speaking Vocabulary is meant as those words that we can say and use correctly. This allows us to express ourselves, she noted. Reading Vocabulary is expressed in words that we can read fluently with understanding, while Writing Vocabulary relates to the words that we can quickly write and using them correctly with proper spelling, Dr. Curtis discussed.

She also briefed that by age 3, there is strong evidence of a gap in vocabulary knowledge for children who have little exposure to reading. Grade 1 vocabulary predicted students’ reading achievement in secondary school and early differences in vocabulary knowledge remain, she said.

She then underlined that the power of having a child to have background knowledge and setting a purpose and engage them as well as motivate them, help clarify things keep them enjoy and knowing their favorite choice is key. There are many ways at home to support children become readers and reading starts at birth and set a foundation during such period, Dr. Laurie noted. Such reading barriers can be eliminated by helping parents understand the importance of reading at early age and finding time both in school and at home and access high quality books so that children can read independently with this remark Dr. Curtis concluded her presentation.

## **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Ethiopia 2021 Result**

*Dr. Effa Gurmu, National Educational Assessment and Examination Agency /NEAEA/*

Dr. Effa from Ministry of Education made a presentation on “The 5th Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA 2020/2021)”. In his introduction, Dr.

Effa noted that EGRA measures the skills children need to successfully learn to read and is a diagnostic tool assesses the most basic foundational skills for literacy acquisition in early grades. Dr. Effa stresses that reading is a core skill that leads to a better ability to learn from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” adding that those children who cannot read cannot learn well in school

Dr. Effa added that children lag in reading at certain grade level, stay behind forever, and he cautions that the gap widens if early measures are not taken. He noted also those children who do not learn to read at early grades struggle to develop more advanced skills in the years to come

While discussing the objectives of EGRA, the presenter disclosed that it investigates children’s reading skills at early stage and it also document children performance on early grade reading skills in order to inform stakeholders regarding system needs for improving instruction. The objectives also include the EGRA strives to find out how various factors from contextual questionnaires associate with students’ performances. He further said that such objectives will help to take evidence based measures to promote reading skills at early stage.

Dr. Effa disclosed the gathering of the basic research questions emanated from the aforementioned objectives and also briefed the study methods and sampling procedures.



The research has used a total of 484 school principals, 19,360 students and 968 teachers with nine different languages that include Amharic, Oromifa, Afar language, Hadiyissa, Berta, Sidamo, Wolaitta and Nuer languages.

He then elaborated the EGRA Tools/Data Collection Instruments, the Administration protocol and data analysis methods.

The research employed various tools to find out major challenges facing reading skills of children and some of the hurdles included inability to match sounds to letters, to read common words. The major findings of the research were categorically discussed in the following subtasks:

- **Performance on timed and Untimed Subtasks**
- **Performance by Proficiency levels**
- **Performance of Students by Year**

### **Performance on timed and Untimed Subtasks and Performance by Proficiency levels**

Dr. Effa elaborated that regarding performance on untimed subtasks by grade level in each language, there was major gap on reading in grades and variance between the level of reading among the study areas specially the result shows that Afar and Nuer lagged behind other towns. The study also identified that males slightly performed better than females in most languages however females performed slightly better than males in FWR and IWR for Somali Affi as well as in FWR for Berta.

The findings of the research also disclosed that performance of children of G2 and G3 is better in listening comprehension with better phonemic awareness performance except for Afar Af, Barta and Nuer. He urged for much attention to be given for reading comprehension as the research shows an alarming result nonetheless with better listening capacity.

The research also has found out the result both in urban and rural areas where students from urban areas have performed well as compared to rural students. However, the research result shows that rural students are better than urban in some subtasks such as in Somali, Nuer, and Sidaamu.



The research results disclosed alarming findings on poor reading culture among the study groups. While discussing this serious findings, Dr Iffa noted that about 68% G2 children were zero readers at national level and particularly Afar and Berta languages had highest zero readers (92%) an alarming level. He urged the need to pay due attention on efforts on to reverse the results. However, in both grades 2 &3 the percentage of zero readers of EGRA 2021 was higher than all previous studies, remarked Dr. Effa.

Dr. Effa discussed the factors significantly related to students' reading,



including principal's highest level of education, length of training for school principals on MT, frequency of school principal's support for MT teachers on teaching reading skills, among others.

The findings of the study revealed that 84 percent of teachers have participated in-service or CPD trainings on their mother tongue at national level and 16 percent did not take any teacher training and about 46 percent of teachers did not obtain training on MT.

Ninety percent of teachers took training on how to teach MT materials and only about ten percent did not attend at national level reported, Dr. Effa. The study also assessed the availability of resource provided to teachers, principals and students. The presented said that most students' shares MT textbook with one to five ratio and 47 percent schools do not have functional PSTA while 77 percent do not support PSTA student learning in reading or not functional discussed the report.

Another alarming report identified in the study included the no or limited availability of school libraries. Dr. Effa disclosed that more than 50 percent of teachers responded that they don't have functional school libraries; this was

also responded by students with inadequate additional reading materials in all responses. The findings presented by Dr. Effa disclosed that more than 33 percent of students have no enough time to study or read at home and more than 40 percent of children said that they have no support for reading at home. The presenter also mentioned about major factors that decides the fate of reading among children and such factors include level of education of principals, length of training for school principals on MT, frequency of school principal's support for MT teachers on teaching reading skills among others. Method of teaching is found to be decisive for effective reading and oral evaluations, checking classroom exercise and homework are also essential in determining children reading skill, discloses the presenter.

The impact of COVID – 19 impact on education was discussed in the presentation. Dr. Effa revealed that 44 % of students were without any school work during the COVID-19 schools' closure and 61 percent of teachers did not engage in any school work during the school closures.

On conclusion, Dr. Effa noted that for the grade levels, the overall mean scores of timed subtasks revealed students' very low performance in each language.

He also discussed that for most languages, students performed better on untimed subtasks, though, children ability in reading comprehension is still challenging. It was also found that there is a slight mean difference across gender, location and program types where it in favor for boys, urban and GEQIP respectively in most languages and subtasks.

He reiterated that looking children performance at each proficiency levels, large percentage of them fall under zero readers and added that only few of children are at the functional reading levels (13% - G2 & 22% -G3). He cautioned that the trend of children reading performance is declining overtime. Dr. Effa summarized the main factors affect children reading performance, including, qualification of school principals and teachers, school principals and MT teachers' professional development/ trainings, instructional materials (textbooks, teacher's guide, SRM), school facilities (functional library, reading corners), support for children's reading (family, school and PSTA), method of teaching and assessment techniques in teaching reading skills.

While winding up his presentation, Dr. Effa he recommended the crucial issues that need dire attention. He underlined that EGRA 2021 is the lowest result than previous EGRA studies. Thus, he urged the need to make it national agenda and mobilize the whole society and all stakeholders

He also underscored the need to minimize the disparity in reading performance across subgroups (gender, location, language) as that necessitates proper planning and intervention at all levels. He also urged the need for school leaders to be trained on how to support teachers in teaching MT and their qualification should be upgraded as that helps to improve the quality of school leadership. It was also noted that teachers' upgrading should strengthened as some teachers are still teaching reading without any training and most of them had certificate. Encouraging teachers to use various methods of teaching and assessment techniques such as how to teach reading was identified as crucial issue.

He also called the provision of instructional materials, including textbooks, teacher's guides, SRM and school resources such as library or reading corners. It was also noted that strengthening functional Parent-Teacher-Student-Association to involvement in school activities is important to ensure that students are learning. Enhance the education sector's commitment and accountability system was forwarded in the conclusion. In cases of emergency such as the recent COVID 19 or conflicts, the application of crisis management and risk management is key to address such challenges. Dr. Effa concluded that the impact of EGRA interventions should be regularly assessed and evaluated.

### Question and Discussion Session

Following the presentations made on EGRA, participants have forwarded their reflections and opinions. The ER is recognized as being Reading Ambassador since it contributed a lot on children



reading. Summary of the issues are listed as follows: -

- A participant put the result of the assessment as shocking and the way out must be done at the ground level, the lack of intervention paid us a lot so that actions must be taken sooner than later to rescue the generation. The participant urged that reading must be the prime agenda of the government, private sectors and CSOs in general.
- Another participant pointed out the importance of providing emphasis for early childhood period that starts from conception of a child in the womb especially from conception to up to three years of time. During such periods pregnant mothers are advised to read stories so that the conceived baby can listen to it, the participant noted. She also stresses parents should read books for their children willingly and in funny approach as such habits will cement the bondage between parents and children. Such interventions should also consider parents who can't read, and such audio materials will be vital suggested by the participant. She urged ER to further strive to promote reading culture using new and the available platforms noting that follow up for community libraries and enhancing collaboration among sectors are important.
- A participant from the AAU mentioned some elements of the study approach. He noted that some elements of cognitive development are not employed in the assessment and forwarded a question as to what extent the study examines positive achievements of reading in Ethiopia.
- Another participant explained and raised a question if the assessment included children with special needs.



## Language in the Ethiopian New Curriculum

*Mrs. Aster Berhe, Ministry of Education*



Mrs. Aster Berhe commenced her presentation by underlining as education is the best tool that equips learners with the knowledge, competencies, attitudes, skills and

values relevant to achieve the behavioral change required. She further noted that in order to acquire knowledge and bring about the required behavioral change, language is one of the essential tools which play an irreplaceable role. Mrs. Aster affirmed that Ethiopia has been working towards accelerated improvement in educational provisions, with particular emphasis on providing "quality and equitable education for all" which is instrumental to develop 21st century competencies and move the society forward. In line with this, the major aim of this curriculum framework developed for the general education system of the country is to produce citizens who are innovative, inventive, productive, self-directed, responsible and active contributors to national development, she said.

Many studies were conducted on various issues of the system of education including its curriculum, she noted. Lots of changes have been introduced on the basis of the outcomes and recommendations of the studies and changes in political governance and policies said Aster further noting that reform measures have taken on education. It was disclosed that Ministry of Education has finalized preparation to commence on at pre-primary, primary and middle level.

Ethiopia is a multi-lingual country where over 80 languages are spoken and of these, more than 53 are taught as subjects and are used as media of instruction starting from early grade and primarily levels. The new English

language curriculum framework which has been developed in line with the new general education curriculum is followed by learning outcomes, content flow chart, minimum learning competencies and syllabus. School-age children start learning the first language from the pre-primary level and may continue learning it as a subject, explained Aster. English is a subject starting from grade one and used as a mandatory medium of instruction in grades nine throughout the twelfth grade.

It was noted that primary school children have serious language problems and lack basic skills of reading and writing in all languages, including mother tongue which is medium of instruction. Amharic is been the federal working language and English as the language of science and technology as shown in various studies conducted by EGRA, NALA and MoE. English language is a serious challenge for many subject teachers as well as for those teachers teaching English as a subject, disclosed in the presentation.

In the 2018-30 educational reform is proposed whereby primary education will be the biggest emphasis for children to enhance their reading, speaking and writing skills and accordingly children start mother tongue as a medium of instruction from grade one and more emphasis for oral, spoken, listening aspects until grade three. Learners are also expected to learn one federal language from range of federal languages. Based on the decision of concerned regional authorities, the selected federal language may be learnt starting from any grade and would continue further. Providing training to teachers on language education is also part of the curriculum reform considered as noted by Aster.

According to the new education road map learners are also expected to learn one federal language from among federal languages that include Amharic, Afar, Afaan Oromo and Tigrigna and Somali language and some are being implemented said Aster.

Related with challenges in medium of languages, Aster noted on her presentations, English is the medium of instruction in CTE's as well as university teacher training faculties underlined Aster. In the case of CTE's, graduates are deployed to teach students in mother tongue at of the primary

school. The graduates who become teachers in primary schools find it difficult to deliver a subject matter they studied in CTE in English into the mother tongue of the student's further noted Aster.

Prospective teachers are expected to aligning language of Instruction College of teacher training to learn various Ethiopian languages and the syllabus of English languages in the new curriculum structure have the basic skills listening, writing, speaking and reading. Reading skill is practiced by pre, while and post reading activities and also the students practice English phonemes connecting with appropriate letters, a way forward still underway in Ethiopia, presented by Aster.

## **VIDEO PRESENTATIONS**

Succeeding the discussion, videos were presented. Read@Home, an interesting video presentation was presented to share experiences from Senegal and Cameroon emphasized the availability of reading materials, animations and reading time at home as important factors in achieving better results.

Another video of Scottish Book Trust – Early Years- Book Bug Program founded by Scottish government it was introduced what the program holds for children and parents by encouraging parents and children to share stories and songs before birth creating bonding among families as well as building a foundation for children to develop their vocabulary and introducing children with books before they learn to read.

### **Question and Discussion session**

Lack of enough training for teachers and librarians before the launch of the new curriculum is one of the major concerns forwarded by participants. Such reflections include MoE need to give prime attention to reading, double standard in curriculum that is clearly witnessed in the curriculum of private school and how the road map accommodates such issues, the mode of teachers training specially for teachers who teaches from grade one to four, the difference between pre-formal education in private and government schools, teachers need to be oriented in reading skill irrespective of subjects thought, the importance of the curriculum to be reading oriented.

A participant lamented that imposing foreign language in the education system would endanger the sovereignty of the nation quoting the Syrian teacher who used to teach in Ethiopia long years ago.

The impact of international schools in education was communicated as a concern by a participant. The qualification of school teachers and the curriculum were among the concerns communicated by participants.

While responding to the raised questions Aster said that the suggestions raised are pertinent and vital to shape the future. Having said she noted that these massive activities are underway by MoE that targets on teachers training. With regard to international school they have their own curriculum to be carried out



however the rest are obliged to implement the national curriculum and yet there is lack of follow up by the government to monitor such teaching practices. Teaching using MT language vary depends on the situation some applies from

grade 2 and some others from 6 and 8 Aster noted and added that English will be applied from grade 9 as it is an international language and also a language of technology. The curriculum will also address the KG levels applied in private school, remarked Aster. Concerning the qualification of teachers, she said that a diploma is a minimum requirement to teach from 1-6 grades and above that first degree and above, noted Aster. Concluding her reflections she said that efforts are underway to develop education in Ethiopia addressing the lack of book distribution to students and for that to be a reality synergy and sustainable cooperation among relevant stakeholders is crucial.

## Recap

Day one of the third annual reading summit was concluded by the summary made by Mr. Getaneh Anteneh who briefly stated all the discussions and presentations forwarded from panelists and the audience.



## DAY 2

The session for day two started with a harmonized song from children from Gebeta community library presenting songs of peace. Following that a well-known Ethiopian journalist and MC of the program, Ato Yonas Kebede, made a recap of the previous day.



## DAY 2 – PRESENTATION:

### Emergency Response in Children’s Education

*Mr. Nigatu Abebe, Ministry of Education*



Mr. Nigatu disclosed that the Main purpose of the presentation is to assess the overall “Education in Emergency” situation in Ethiopia focused on conflict affected areas and in relation to that the presentation aimed to assess the government and

developmental partners and humanitarian organizations in general in emergency response mechanisms on conflict affected Regions. The presentation would demonstrate challenged and forward recommendations, it was noted.

Mr. Nigatu Abebe commenced his presentation recognizing the country’s good performance in expanding formal and non-formal education opportunities over the last decades. It was noted that in this effort, a remarkable success has been achieved in primary, secondary and tertiary education access and yet, there is still a critical challenge in Quality, noted Mr. Nigatu.

While discussing education in emergencies, Mr. Nigatu noted that as it encompasses learning opportunities for all ages, early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. He also added that education in emergency areas is a fundamental right, that it is necessary for critical health, for saving lives and sustaining skills, for social reconstruction and to keep the children in schools.

He also said that the Ethiopian education system is vulnerable to natural disasters and conflict-related emergencies. From 2017 until 2020, Ethiopia experienced several humanitarian emergencies in 2020 which affected 26M school-age children nationwide, remarked Mr. Nigatu.

The presenter also mentioned about the past experience of Ethiopia he particularly mentioned about the recent emergency assessment was made by MOE and EDRMC. Accordingly, more than 2300 schools were fully damaged in Afar, Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz and Oromia and more than 4600 schools were partly damaged. It was disclosed that MoE and partners prepared emergency response plan and experts were assigned on conflict affected Areas to plan, organize and distribute school materials based on the actual data. He also briefed the gathering as temporary learning spaces were established and also partially damaged schools were rebuilt. Community mobilization was crucial element in the efforts.

In addition, psycho-social support was provided, and TOT training was conducted to more than 400 teachers in Amhara and Afar regions. The trained teachers were cascaded the training to 3,513 teachers and school leaders, it was learnt. Such measures were effective in returning majority of students who were previously displaced from their education, underlines Nigatu. The provision of school feeding program and supply of educational materials in temporary camps can be considered as achievements said Nigatu.

Despite the achievements, Mr. Nigatu highlighted some of the challenges of education in emergency, which included scarcity of financial and human resources, delayed response of partners, sectors in efficient service delivery, lack of skilled man power in the education sector, absence of clear data, poor school infrastructure, little attention of partners in conflict affected areas

specially regarding to budget allocation and other related issues. The imbalance of demand and supply of education provision, volatile conflict and lack of political commitment in decision making and shortage of learning materials in IDPs are also considered as major challenges mentioned by Mr. Nigatu.

While concluding his presentation, Mr. Nigatu forwarded recommendations. The importance of preparing short and long term plan to mitigate the challenges of education during emergency is crucial to mitigate the challenges. In addition to these, preparing strategies, manuals, protocols and protocols are found to be essential for effective emergency response for IDPs. Raising the awareness of the program via co-curricular activities , formulate impact assessment of emergency school feeding program , Lobby for resource Humanitarian and Private sectors, Strengthen coordination platform with partners, Strengthen the coordination between the sectors and enhancing community engagement are major recommendations put forward by the presenter.

Mr. Nigatu also noted that stakeholders need to work in close relationship with Natural Disaster Risk Management Commission and Preparedness Plan. He winds up his presentation by urging the need to strengthening the education cluster to address education during emergency and also to develop resource mapping and mobilize more resource to fill the funding gaps.

## Questions and Discussions

A participant recognized that reading should not be a luxury rather it is taken as a survival issue. A concern related with lack of graduates in library profession was communicated and urged MoE to take that into consideration. It was also noted that though Ministry of Education has built several buildings for educational purpose however it was



lamented that it was unable to promote quality education. Similarly, large amount of money is invested in libraries but without adequate books for students. It was noted that considering special need in the emergency program is vital to support the most vulnerable group, providing attention to parental education, interventions must center parents. The issue presented in the summit is timely and crucial recognized by a participant and urged sponsors to better finance books from publishing to distribution ideal to create better society and generation, corporate and huge companies must discharge their corporate social responsibility which is vital for themselves and creating better society. The participant further urged civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in building of libraries and provision of books especially in rural areas. Provision of tax incentives for book publishers would encourage authors and publishers and boosts reading culture in Ethiopia, it was suggested. It was recognized that such interventions are essential to produce intergenerational reading materials or books. Enhancing peace building efforts comes at the frontline to curb conflicts and reduce IDPs in Ethiopia as reflected by participants. Shortages of librarians are observed in most schools and government should assign librarians like it does for other subjects. Other reflections raised include the issues presented resembles post crisis interventions and packages must be ready to handle emergencies like it was practiced in previous times where displaced people used to have reading opportunities, food provision, time for children to sing and others. The interventions must be categorized as pre-crisis and crisis and the two must be separated noted a participant.



The challenge faced by the education sector is far beyond to resolve in available capacity however enhancing the culture of voluntarism and alternative curriculum must be ready to implement during crisis. Participants also call for Ethiopia

Reads to examine research results and their implementation in to practice and

this would be an assignment for ER to be disclosed during the 4th Annual Summit. Utilizing local resources and well to do people locally must be considered as source of funding and this must be supported by policies suggests participant. Such summits must invite ministry of women, ministry of health and children affairs who are major stakeholders and expected to work in collaboration and the role of media can have the power to make or break to empower citizens and children.

Nigatu from ministry of education made his reflection following the raised questions from participants. He said that most of the comments and opinions are pertinent that must be included in plans. He also said that adult and non-formal education is growing that enhances the literacy rate of Ethiopia however MOE will try to respond those concerns raised by participants of the summit. While responding to the issue of crisis management raised from participants Nigatu underlines that saving lives is the prime task in emergency that is however followed by intervention measures to stabilize IDPs and early emergency measures must be taken in to account.

## Reprinted Books Launch Program

**Recognition remark by Yitagesu Getnet,**

**Director of Blaten Geta Hiruy W/sellasie, Ethiopian Science Academy**

Mr. Yitagesu Getnet, Director of Blaten Geta Hiruy W/sellasie at the Ethiopian Science Academy commended Ethiopia Reads for its career development and



achievement. As an author Yitagesu appreciated the role of ER in promoting reading culture seriously and in consistent manner in Ethiopia. Mr. Yitagesu noted that libraries which are constructed by ER

some ten years ago are still supported by ER which is also part of the network.

ER has published more than 200,000 children books over the years via Ready Set Go books program which is a big milestone, noted Mr. Yitagesu. In addition to receiving books in the form of donation ER also purchased books from local sources remarked Mr. Yitagesu. More astounding, he noted that ER has currently published children's books that are not available in the market to be launched in this event. ER republished the books of five authors each with 5,000 copies and congratulated the authors. Mr. Yitagesu also called on the authors for recognition in front of the audience. In his initial invitation he called Marry Jaffar, one of the renowned writers of children's book in Ethiopia and she has written more than 40 books, warmly praised by Mr. Yitagesu.

Daniel Worku one of the renowned writers of Ethiopia who published more than 100 books was the other recognized person. He is one of those writers whose book is republished by ER. Daniel is also known for hosting reading campaigns such as Let Ethiopia Reads, Let Addis Ababa Reads among others. Asres Bekele, writer and comedian in children entertainment has been one of the writers whose book is republished by Ethiopia



Reads. The author of series of the Books of Araya, Sammrawit Araya is one of those writers whose book is republished by ER and Yitagesu finally called on Selamawit Muluegeta to the stage that is well known for the famous TV Entertainment Ye Ethiopia Lijoch. Finally, the event called on children to inaugurate and launch the republished books in front of the audience.

The authors were celebrated on the reprinting of their story books in collaboration with guest children from Gebeta Children's Community Library celebrated the event with the authors on stage and officially launched the reprinted books. More fascinating is Mrs. Mary Jafar, one of the authors whose books are reprinted narrated (did a read aloud) parts of the story from her book entitled with "Miti Mititi" to the audience in a very lively manner.

## Panel Discussion

The book launch ceremony was followed by panel discussion where the authors shared their experience to the audience. During the panel discussion authors have shared their immense experience on reading culture, their overall journey as well as their experience on the process they had with Ethiopia Reads.

Mrs. Marry Jafar, one of those authors whose book is reprinted made a remarkable speech and praises God for such recognition and incentives made



by ER. She was heartbroken to miss her husband due to death the one who supported and encouraged her and attributed for her achievement, said Marry. Her

gratitude also goes to ER especially for Yemisrach and Yitagesu who supported her in her career since the preceding several years. While speaking about her first book she acknowledged Kuraz publishing enterprise for promoting reading culture in Ethiopia now its role replaced by Ethiopia Reads.

Mr. Asres Bekele, comedian and author of children's book commended the audience for taking part in the summit. He further said that television drama and puppet show were his previous experience that later converted to children's book writing. His first book was the Diary of Cherry where Andinet Amare and Marry Jafar contribution was immense said Asres. Since then he has continued writing and publishing children's book that he gained immense satisfaction and passion towards it.

Asked about the fate of children's book in Ethiopia, Daniel Worku, the well-known author said that he exerted a remarkable effort in promoting and publishing children's book in Ethiopia and he called on all stakeholders to employ their maximum effort to help rescue the reading culture which he characterized it as it is on the verge of dying. While sharing his experience he narrated a successful story of a city in Brazil, which has made a remarkable initiative in promoting education and reading culture. Books must be updated noted the author and success stories must be promoted rather than lamenting on failure. Promoting success stories would inspire acknowledged Daniel. Praising people for their achievement must be exercised in the society underlined Daniel.

Mrs. Selamawit Mulugeta also shared her experience as she has started writing in 2006 and to date she has published six books. She however made it clear that it is difficult to get return from the sale of the books which is somehow frustrating to carry on the job. The price of publishing and dividend shared with publishers is discouraging, further noted Selamawit.

The other panelist was Mrs. Nardos Abebe who shared her valuable experience in promoting reading culture in her community. While sharing her idea she recalled that promoting reading culture must be the responsibility of all stakeholders including religious fathers who are the primary persons to introduce reading in religious places. Nardos has managed to spread reading activities in the area of her residence (Tafo Condominium) where she started with a motto of "Tafo Reads". Using online technology Nardos has also tried to train parents about the importance of education, reading and attending schools among others. Reading is the way-out to provide intergenerational knowledge to children said Nardos. Reading starts from listening said Nardos and such practice must be exercised at family level to support children's reading even this is helpful to promote reading culture in rural areas where level of illiteracy is high. Parents must be role model for their children reading habit suggested Nardos.



## Discussion and Reflections

The warm panel discussion was followed by reflections from the audience attending the event. Such reflections include the need to promote reading digitally to reach out more readers. Interestingly, the MC of the Summit, Yonas Kebede, picked this up and promised to start his own “Summit area Reads” activity, which he noted as an impressive cascade that should support ER, as signs that ER wings are spreading wide. A religious father from holy trinity cathedral acknowledged the authors for their effort in promoting reading culture in Ethiopia and urged parents to introduce ethics to their children in addition to promoting reading. Donating books is quite important urged a participant from Saint Mary University and pledged to support in such areas with other volunteers as part of community service.

## Recognition

In her remark Yemisrach Worku, Director of ER acknowledged Jane Curtis for her remarkable role as a co-founder of ER in 1998 and writing numerous children books as well as highly concerned on Ethiopian literacy. Especially she is an active player and leader in distributing and writing and printing thousands of books in collaboration with Open Heart Speaks and recently Jane



Curtis has obtained recognition from International Board for Books for Young People (IBBY) for her role in promoting Ethiopia Reads and her role in Open Hearts and Yemisrach in her part recognizes Jen Curtis for her achievement.

The other remarkable event and the very first recognition program was also held recognizing authors who put their life time contribution on reading and

promoting reading culture among the society. The authors who obtained recognition has received certificate of recognition from Mr. Malcolm, ER board of director.

The first recognition went to Reverend Moges Mekonnen, a priest and a role model for promoting children to read books since childhood witnessed by Mr.



Daniel Worku. While receiving his recognition, Moges recalled his role in supplying books for children by receiving ten cents years ago to encourage reading among children. Assistant Prof. Dereje Gebre also received recognition from Mr. Malcolm for his remarkable role in promoting reading in Ethiopia. While

presenting his testimony, Daniel said that, Ass. Prof. Dereje is one of the most adorable and industrious lecturers in Addis Ababa University. While speaking at the recognition ceremony, Dereje extended his deepest gratitude to ER especially in supporting one of his books written on how to promote reading skills among children that are disseminated for wider audience such as communities and to Abrehot Library among others. Kebede G/Medihin writer and teacher also got recognition from the honorable guest of the day.

The award recipient is also the father of Mr. Yonas Kebede who MC of the day and journalist is Teshale is the most favorite books of Kebede witnesses Yonas. Adding his testimony Yonas said that there



is much resemblance of life experience between him and his father as both had studied at Kotebe College and Addis Ababa University. While receiving his

certificate Mr. Kebede highly appreciated ER and revealed that the honor and the prize were beyond his imagination and pledged on to keep up the good job.

Mrs. Mary Jaffar is the distinguished author and publisher who also received recognition from Mr. Malcolm. The attention of family towards kids is determinant in deciding the fate of children remarked Marry adding that the legacy of human being pays back and she was also grateful for ER and Merry Joy Ethiopia and pledged to continue what she has started until the end of her life.

Comedian and author Asres Bekele also received recognition from Yonas Kebede MC of the event reads out the achievement of Asres Bekele as he wrote several books, radio drama and short stories that



inspires and entertains children. Receiving his recognition Asres made a humorous joke and his happiness for the recognition. He also appreciated ER in promoting authors to publish books.

Daniel Worku, one of the most distinguished writers of Ethiopia who wrote 110



books received recognition from the hands of Mr.Malcolm. “The recognition will inspire me” said Daniel and called on the participants of the Summit to keep up working diligently and commended the role of ER for its achievement. The last recognition recipient went to Hailemeleket Mewail, who used to narrator the story of ‘*Yewedianesh*’ at Ethiopian Radio, the author of Gungun and who has dedicated his life in reading and writing children’s book. While receiving an award on behalf of Hailemeleket,

Frezer from National Archives and Library Service presented her testimony that Hailemeleket is advocator for the essence of reading to the wider public.

## Closing Ceremony

The award recognition was followed by concluding summary from Mr. Getaneh Anteneh who served as teacher and worked at ECA as language training coordinator. Getaneh is also the author of Gobew and who also translated the book Tower in the Sky to Amharic. In his concluding remark he said that much emphasis should be given for solutions rather than lamenting on problems facing the public. Cost of publishing is one of the discouraging factors for authors noted Getaneh sharing his own personal experience while writing two unpublished works waiting for days when better printing price would come.

The session of day two was wonderful as it presented research papers on reading during emergency presented by Ministry of Education. The paper also comprises all the emergencies occurred in Ethiopia and its post crisis intervention made by the ministry. The initiative of New Ethiopian School to be launched by ministry of education is inspiring and commendable. In his concluding remark he highlighted the concerns raised by panelists such as the need to provide much attention for librarian training, encouraging voluntarism, and continuing support for IDP children and promoting the culture of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ensuring peace and security of the country must be addressed by the government, Implementing the research in to practical action must be taken seriously to bring solutions and the experience raised from Nardos Abebe who launched “Let Tafo Read” must be shared to communities .

## Final Remark

The session has come to an end with reflections forwarded from participants of the summit. Some of these include the summit is vital in sharing knowledge and practical experience said a participant who is engaged in printing business further said that the ever-increasing printing price is discouraging authors and writers and extends his excuse for the adversity unfolding. Family’s role is indispensable in nurturing reading culture among children remarks a panelist further added that currently most children are far from libraries and spending much of their time in playing and watching movies hence weekly reading campaign is advised.

# ART & CULTURE

## ETHIOPIA READS HOSTS 3RD SUMMIT TO SPARK YOUNGSTER'S INTELLECT THROUGH READING



**P**repared by Ethiopia Reads/ERI, the third annual children's reading summit was held on September 22-23, 2022 for two days with the theme of "Early Childhood Development in Reading" at Addis Ababa Sapphire Addis hotel.

Aimed to inform, discuss and reflect on challenges and opportunities on children reading culture, the summit brought together more than 150 education stakeholders from Ethiopia and beyond.

Ethiopia Reads children summit started in 2019 and due to the pandemic and conflict in the country it was interrupted for one year and resumed this year for its third summit collaborating with the Ministry of Education.

Founded in 1998, Ethiopia Reads has been working at building youth and children's literacy across Ethiopia. Its first library was established in 2003, and since that time ER has built more than 72 libraries spanning every region of the country, shipping more than a quarter million books and serving over 130,000 children per year.

The ER programs are managed by Ethiopians who live and work in Addis Ababa and the regional capital of Hawassa.

In Ethiopia, one of the biggest obstacles to literacy development is lack of reading materials for children in native languages. ER has stepped in with an offer to develop story books for children in several major Ethiopian languages. The organization has also begun collecting a bibliography of children's literature in Ethiopia, both historical and current.

