



Ethiopia Reads

Annual Report 2025

Property of Ethiopia Reads

January, 2026

List of Acronyms

ER	Ethiopia Reads
A.A.	Addis Ababa
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UN LINKS	United Nations Library and Information Knowledge Services
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UK	United Kingdom
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
IDP	Internally Displaced Population
CPD	Continuous Professional Development

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Executive Summary

In 2025, Ethiopia Reads (ER) advanced its mission to build a sustainable culture of reading by delivering high-impact literacy interventions that reached children, families, and education system across Ethiopia, including in underserved and conflict-affected communities. Guided by evidence and more than decades of experience, ER combined access to quality reading materials with capacity building, family engagement, and national advocacy to ensure lasting literacy outcomes.

At the community level, the Gebeta Children's Community Library, Hawassa Reading Center, Horse and Donkey Powered Literacy programs have served as dynamic platforms for learning, reading, creativity, and well-being. Through daily library services, structured literacy activities, family literacy programs, and a Summer Camp activities integrating Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), ER supported measurable improvements in children's literacy and numeracy skills while strengthening parental involvement and volunteer-led support systems. These interventions addressed learning gaps, promoted socio-emotional development and reading as a joyful, everyday practice.

In early childhood development, ER has been implemented the ECD Project 2025 to strengthen language and literacy foundations for children aged 0–6 in partnership with Addis Ababa City Administration Mayor Office. The project is producing culturally and linguistically relevant children's books, initiated Ethiopia's first mass production of locally produced board books, and establishing reading corners in public health facilities. In parallel, ER will build the capacity of parent coach supervisors and coordinators to promote shared reading as a core parenting practice, laying the groundwork for sustainable, system-level impact.

ER also played a critical role in education recovery in conflict-affected areas through the 3R–4–CACE Project in Tigray. In partnership with government stakeholders and with World Bank support, ER delivered 9,360 bilingual storybooks to 78 schools and

strengthened education system capacity through Training of Trainers for supervisors. This integrated approach addressed learning loss, supported mother-tongue instruction, and contributed to both academic and psychosocial recovery for children.

At the national level, ER strengthened literacy advocacy and coordination by convening the 5th Annual Reading Summit, bringing together government, civil society, and development partners to promote early literacy, parental engagement, and culturally responsive storytelling.

Across all programs, Ethiopia Reads demonstrated strong achievements, adaptability, and results-oriented implementation. By pairing high-quality experts with capacity building and community engagement, ER continues to deliver scalable, cost-effective literacy solutions that improve learning outcomes and build resilience for children across Ethiopia.

Vision

To ensure that every child in Ethiopia has the opportunity to grow up with strong literacy skills, emotional wellbeing, confidence, and a positive sense of self through access to reading.

Mission

To foster a sustainable culture of reading in Ethiopia by establishing and supporting libraries, providing quality reading materials, and building the capacity of librarians and educators to deliver effective, child-centered literacy services.

Ethiopia Reads in 2025: At a Glance

- Expanded access to reading and learning for children across urban, peri-urban, rural, and hard-to-reach communities in southern and northern Ethiopia.
- Strengthened community-based literacy models through Reading Centers, Mobile Libraries (Donkey and Horse Powered), and school partnerships.
- Delivered inclusive and age-appropriate learning opportunities through summer camps, literacy sessions, reading festivals, and family-centered events.
- Reached both in-school and out-of-school children, addressing gaps caused by distance, safety concerns, and limited educational resources.
- Sustained learning continuity during school disruptions by providing alternative literacy spaces and access to books.
- Supported teachers, librarians, and education officials through training, discussion platforms, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Promoted local content development, early childhood reading, and culturally relevant materials through book production and distribution.
- Strengthened partnerships with local communities, schools, government offices, Rotary Clubs, embassies, and international supporters.
- Continued to prioritize equity, inclusion, and child-friendly approaches across all programs and locations.

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Program Highlights

I. Library and Literacy Services

1. Gebeta Children's Community Library

A Year of Learning, Play, and Belonging

Throughout 2025, Gebeta Children's Community Library continued to serve as a safe, vibrant, and trusted space for children from surrounding neighborhoods. Open six days a week, the library welcomed children into an environment where reading, creativity, and emotional well-being are nurtured side by side. For many children, Gebeta is more than a library, it is a place where they feel



seen, supported, and inspired to learn.

Daily and weekly programming focused on building strong literacy foundations while making learning joyful and meaningful. Children participated in read-aloud sessions, silent reading hours, reading competitions, and academic tutoring, complemented by creative activities such as drawing, book-making, singing, and game-based literacy sessions. After-school hours remained lively during weekdays, while Saturdays saw especially high attendance as children used the space for homework support, reading, and leisure.

Celebrating Literacy through Play and Experience

Special thematic days played a central role in bringing learning to life. Events such as **Color Day, Fruit Day, International Play Day, and Feelings and Emotions Day** used play-based and experiential learning approaches to support children's cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Through Color Day, children explored creativity and early concepts through art and teamwork. Fruit Day introduced literacy, health awareness, and storytelling in fun and memorable ways, with children drawing, spelling, and learning about fruits through games and animated storytelling. International Play Day brought children together across age groups to learn cooperation, self-expression, and inclusion through carefully designed activities. Feelings and Emotions Day created a safe space for children to recognize, express, and manage emotions using storytelling, games, reflection, and creative expression, an important step in supporting emotional literacy.

These celebrations confirmed Gebeta's belief that children learn best when they feel safe, joyful, and engaged.

Outreach, Advocacy, and Community Engagement

In January 2025, Gebeta participated in a national reading promotion exhibition in Werabe City, Central region of the country, organized by the National Library and Archive Agency (NALA). Despite the event coinciding with exam season, Gebeta's interactive temporary library booth became one of the most visited, drawing children through read-alouds, storytelling, games, and child-led activities. The experience highlighted the strong appeal of child-centered literacy approaches and extended Gebeta's impact beyond its immediate community.

Gebeta also contributed to the **International Literacy Day celebration in Jenka city**, organized by World Vision Ethiopia and MOE, where Ethiopia Reads staffs engaged children and parents in shared reading activities and donated approximately 300 books to the community. The celebration expanded to include outreach at the Jenka

correctional facility, combining literacy, art, and storytelling to promote inclusion and dignity. These efforts strengthened partnerships, community ownership, and public awareness around the importance of reading.

Strengthening Families as Literacy Partners

Family engagement remained a cornerstone of Gebeta's work in 2015. A series of Family Literacy Events empowered parents as active partners in their children's learning. Through practical training, reflective discussions, and peer sharing, parents gained tools to support reading at home, create positive learning environments, and strengthen emotional connections with their children.

Sessions addressed shared reading strategies, early literacy stimulation, responsive parenting, and parental well-being. Parents reported improved confidence, stronger parent-child relationships, and positive changes in their children's reading habits and emotional behavior. These outcomes reaffirmed the importance of holistic, family-centered approaches to literacy development.

Summer Camp and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)



One of the year's most significant milestones of Gebeta was the successful implementation of the Gebeta Summer Camp, which for the first time integrated *Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)* as a major activity for selected children. The eight-week program engaged 120 children and 48 volunteers, focusing on literacy, numeracy, creativity, and social development.

Using baseline and end-line assessments, children were grouped according to learning levels rather than age or grade, allowing instruction to be responsive and effective. Results showed measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy, alongside increased confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Beyond TaRL sessions, children participated in storytelling, creative arts, science activities, health education, games, and drama, creating a well-rounded learning experience.

The program concluded with a community celebration showcasing children's achievements and strengthening bonds among families, volunteers, and the library.

Annual Statistics of Gebeta

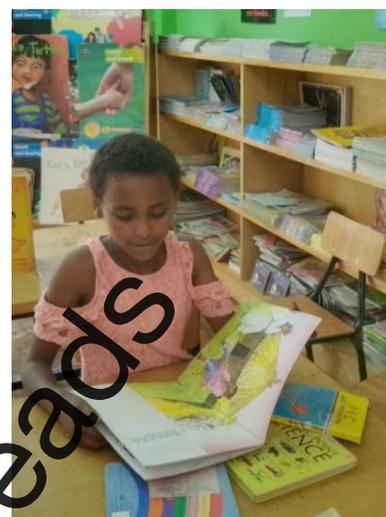
No	Users		Total
	M	F	
Number of users	49	76	125
Number of Visits	796	1,400	2,196

Moments That Matter: Children's Stories



Behind every activity are children whose lives are quietly transformed. Mahder Moges, a 10-year-old and Best Reader of the Month, is not only an avid reader but also a young leader who brings his younger siblings to the library and supports their learning.

Eyu Adiss is displaced by the conflict in Amhara region and unable to attend school during the year, and found stability and belonging at Gebeta, visiting daily and rediscovering joy in learning. Their stories reflect the deeper impact of Gebeta, not only building readers, but nurturing resilience, confidence, and hope.



Looking Ahead

In 2025, Gebeta Children's Community Library strengthened its role as a center of literacy, care, and community connection. Through joyful learning, family engagement, volunteer support, and inclusive programming, the library continued to respond to children's academic and emotional needs. Recognizing the diverse learning needs of its users, Gebeta also strengthened its academic support systems. In collaboration with child well-being volunteers' association and students from Addis Ababa University, the library currently registered 32 volunteer tutors who will begin structured support for children facing learning difficulties in the school year of 2026.

As it looks ahead, Gebeta remains committed to expanding quality learning opportunities and ensuring that every child who walks through its doors feels welcomed, supported, and empowered to learn.

2. Hawassa Reading Center



In 2025, the Hawassa Reading Center (HRC) continued to play a significant role in advancing literacy and lifelong learning within the Hawassa community. With more than a decade of service, the center remained a trusted and inclusive educational space, operating six days a week and providing consistent access to reading, tutoring, and personal development opportunities. Its open and child-friendly environment enabled families and children to actively engage in meaningful learning experiences, reinforcing HRC's position as a vital community resource.

Throughout the year, HRC implemented a wide range of interactive and learner-centered programs, including read-aloud sessions, academic tutoring, creative art activities, and themed celebrations. These initiatives were intentionally designed to stimulate curiosity, strengthen reading habits, and support holistic child development. The quality and relevance of these programs earned strong appreciation from both parents and children, while continued support from the Hawassa City Administration further strengthened the center's reach and sustainability.

The center's impact in 2025 was reflected in its high level of engagement, serving a total of 4,973 visits by children and youth—2,972 by boys and 2,001 by girls—over the course of the year. In addition to its core services, HRC demonstrated innovation and creativity by introducing new engagement approaches, including the establishment of a dedicated Telegram channel. Through this platform, the center regularly shared weekly updates, videos, photographs, and highlights of student, staff, and volunteer activities, enhancing visibility, community connection, and transparency. Collectively, these efforts underscore HRC's strong performance in 2025 and its continued commitment to nurturing a vibrant culture of reading, creativity, and learning among children and youth in Hawassa.

Highlights of the year in HRC

Summer camp in HRC

The 2025 Summer Camp at the Hawassa Reading Center, which began on July 14, 2025, was one of the center's most well-planned and inclusive programs. Building on

strong preparation and growing community interest, the camp reached 155 children; 70 girls and 85 boys; from kindergarten through Grade 8, reflecting both increased enrollment and the center's continued commitment to serving learners across age groups. The program was conducted six days a week, from Monday to Saturday, providing a structured and supportive learning environment throughout the summer period.



The camp offered a balanced mix of academic enrichment and hands-on learning experiences. Students engaged in structured lessons across two main streams: natural sciences; including English, mathematics, general science, and general knowledge; and social sciences, covering citizenship education, social studies, language arts, and moral education. All subjects were delivered using engaging, age-appropriate approaches, ensuring that learning remained enjoyable, meaningful, and accessible throughout the school break.

Complementing the academic component, the summer camp offered a wide range of creative and extracurricular activities designed to support holistic child development. These included music, drawing and craft sessions, educational games, traditional and sports-based activities, and gardening sessions that introduced children to environmental awareness through hands-on practice. Each activity was carefully planned and organized to maintain a healthy balance between learning, creativity, and play. Regular weekly coordination meetings ensured smooth implementation,

continuous improvement, and active student involvement, including preparation for the graduation event.

After seven successful weeks, the program concluded with a vibrant graduation ceremony attended by parents, staff, and volunteers. The event showcased student achievements through performances, reading competitions, question-and-answer sessions, and artistic presentations, reflecting the skills and confidence gained during the camp. Volunteers were formally recognized with certificates of appreciation and recommendation letters, and students' creative growth was highlighted through collaborative artwork produced during the program.

Overall, the 2025 Summer Camp was a key program of the Hawassa Reading Center, showing strong coordination, inclusive participation, and positive learning outcomes for the children involved.

Christmas Celebration

The 2025 Christmas Celebration at the Hawassa Reading Center was a lively and inclusive event that brought together children, parents, volunteers, and staff. Held on a Saturday to encourage broad participation, the celebration attracted strong community attendance and was supported by careful planning, including venue decoration and logistical arrangements that created a warm and festive atmosphere.



The program opened with welcoming remarks from the Regional Project Officer, Ms. Senait, followed by joyful performances by children, including Christmas songs, poetry, and storytelling. Interactive activities such as general knowledge quizzes, parent-child competitions, fashion shows, and parent-led storytelling further encouraged family involvement and strengthened engagement with the Reading Center.

In addition to entertainment, the program recognized student achievement through



competitions and awards, including special recognition for the best readers of the year, reinforcing the center's commitment to literacy and learning excellence. A traditional coffee and tea ceremony further enriched the event, highlighting

cultural values and fostering a strong sense of togetherness. The event was skillfully facilitated by two student masters of ceremony, Ananiya Matios and Nebiyat Adane, demonstrating youth leadership and confidence.

With the participation of approximately 250 attendees, the 2025 Christmas Celebration concluded successfully with a group photograph to commemorate the occasion. Overall, the event was a resounding success, leaving participants with a strong sense of joy, belonging, and appreciation for the Hawassa Reading Center's ongoing dedication to education, community engagement, and child-centered programming.

Memorable Visitors of HRC

This month, we were delighted to share the inspiring story of three close friends and long-time users of the Hawassa Reading Center (HRC): Netsanet Ayele, Tsion Melese, and Selam Tamrat. The three girls have been part of the HRC community since early childhood, where



they first learned alphabets and numbers before joining formal school. Today, Netsanet and Tsion are both seventh-grade students, while Selam, who is now eleven years old, is in fourth grade. Selam's education was interrupted for two years due to her parents' divorce, which created significant challenges in her schooling. However, she has returned to her studies with strong commitment and is working hard to excel

academically. Her favorite book at HRC is *The Banana of the Small Monkey*, a story that teaches the value of sharing and the importance of healthy eating habits. Selam especially enjoys English and Science, and she dreams of becoming a doctor so she can help strengthen local healthcare services and reduce the need for people to travel abroad for treatment.

Netsanet, a thirteen-year-old seventh grader, also has a remarkable story. She began using HRC as a young child, learning many foundational skills through play in the library. Her favorite book is *The Huge Gorillas*, which she enjoys for its humorous storytelling and the amusing character's love of meat. Netsanet is an excellent student who recently scored outstanding results on the national exam. She aspires to become a bank manager in the future and often expresses her gratitude to HRC for providing access to the reference books that support her studies.

The third member of this inspiring friendship is Tsion Melese, who first came to the HRC library at the age of three. Her favorite book is *me and the Giraffe*, and she loves learning Science, which she considers her strongest subject. Tsion hopes to become a pilot when she grows up, and she is committed to strengthening her skills in both Science and Mathematics to achieve her dream. All three girls are enthusiastic and grateful users of the Hawassa Reading Center. They express heartfelt appreciation to the HRC staff for offering them free access to books, learning materials, and a supportive environment that continues to nurture their academic growth and personal development.



No	User	Sex		Total
		M	F	
1	HRC	2,972	2,001	4,973

3. Old DML /Donkey Mobile Library/

In 2025, the Old Donkey Mobile Library (DML), based at Ethiopia Tikdem School,



continued to play a vital role in expanding access to reading materials and promoting a culture of reading among children both in school and within the surrounding community. Operating three

days per week, the program strategically rotated its services across multiple locations, enabling children in hard-to-reach areas to benefit from library resources and literacy activities.

Throughout the year, DML delivered a wide range of engaging and child-centered activities, including read-aloud sessions, guided study, tutoring, singing, question-and-answer games, and other interactive learning initiatives. These activities not only enhanced children's reading skills but also fostered curiosity, confidence, and a sustained interest in learning.

The program received strong recognition and positive feedback from teachers, parents, and community members, reflecting its meaningful contribution to children's educational development. This collective support reinforced DML's mission and strengthened its continued implementation. In 2025, the Old Donkey Mobile Library successfully reached a total of 2,260 children, including 1,600 in-school children and 660 out-of-school (community) children, demonstrating its significant impact in advancing literacy and learning opportunities.

4. New DML

The New Donkey Mobile Library (DML) was launched with the support of the Rotary Club and operated successfully for one year before transitioning, in April 2025, to full management by Ethiopia Reads. The program continues with generous funding from the Rotary Club of NC Hickory and the Rotary Club of Addis Ababa Central Mella. Initially introduced in the Hiteta area of Hawassa City, the DML aims to expand access to books and foster a reading culture among both in-school children with limited reading skills and out-of-school children with little or no access to learning resources.

The DML addresses key challenges related to low reading proficiency and the lack of extracurricular learning opportunities. It provides important literacy support to students and teachers through storybooks, reference materials, tutoring sessions, guided reading activities, reading festivals, and other child-friendly programs at Tikae School. Similar reading and literacy activities are also carried out in nearby communities through regular outreach visits, extending the program's reach beyond the school.

Officially launched on March 15, 2024, at Tikae School, the program began with the participation of school leaders, city education officials, students, and community members. The mobile library operates six days a week, serving the school community three days per week and neighboring communities on the remaining days. With a diverse collection of books and engaging activities, the Donkey Mobile Library continues to make learning enjoyable while supporting children's literacy development and overall educational growth.

In 2025, the New Donkey Mobile Library served a total of 876 children, comprising 408 male and 468 female users, demonstrating its growing impact in improving access to reading materials and supporting literacy development in Hawassa and its surrounding communities.

Memorable users of the year

One of the regular users of the new DML is Masantu Melaku, a bright 10-year-old girl and a second-grade student. She lives with her parents in Alamura, Hawassa. Her father's name is Melaku Mengesha, and her mother's name is Bizunesh Buna. Masantu is their only child and attends Tiqae Primary School. In her free time, she enjoys playing with other children and is often seen with a joyful smile.

Masantu has big dreams for the future and aspires to become an engineer. She is fascinated by the impressive structures of buildings and the way they are designed and constructed. This curiosity drives her passion for learning. She is one of the most consistent visitors to the DML, attending almost every session. Masantu loves reading educational stories, practicing songs, and reading aloud when she comes to the library.

When it comes to studying, Masantu prefers quiet spaces where she can focus deeply. She likes to tackle one subject at a time, ensuring that she fully understands the material. For instance, when studying English, she takes time to review what she has learned, practicing through examples. If she encounters any challenges, she turns to her father for help. If he cannot provide an answer, she writes down her questions and brings them to her teachers the next day in class.

Her favorite subject is math, where she excels and enjoys solving problems. In addition to her own studies, Masantu also takes time to assist her younger siblings with their homework and assignments, showing a caring and responsible attitude. At home, she helps her parents with various chores, such as washing dishes, cleaning the house, and running errands, demonstrating her strong sense of responsibility and dedication.



5. HPL (Horse Powered Literacy)

Here is a simpler, more natural, and annual-report-friendly version that keeps the key facts and impact clear:

In 2025, the Horse Powered Literacy (HPL) program remained one of Ethiopia Reads' most innovative literacy initiatives, serving children in the southern villages of Ferzano, Tunto, and Kololo. Operating five days a week, the program offered consistent half-day morning sessions that provided young children with regular access to early learning opportunities. Through engaging and age-appropriate activities—including alphabet learning, early reading and writing, singing, guided study, and read-aloud sessions—HPL supported the development of essential literacy skills.

The program addressed major barriers to education in these communities, where many children begin formal schooling late due to long travel distances and safety concerns. By bringing learning closer to home, HPL enabled children to develop reading and writing skills within their own villages.

During periods of school closures in 2025 caused by financial constraints, HPL served as a vital learning alternative, ensuring continued access to books and educational support. For many children, the program became their main source of learning, encouraging collaboration and independent study.

Overall, the Horse Powered Literacy program reached 2,872 children in 2025, highlighting its important role in expanding access to education and strengthening literacy outcomes for underserved children in southern Ethiopia.

6. Early Childhood Development (ECD) Project

Fostering Early Childhood Development through provision of storybooks, training and establishment of reading corners

In 2025, Ethiopia Reads partnered with a philanthropy donor Van Leer Foundation (VLF) and Addis Ababa Mayor Office's Strategic and Planning Management Office (SPMO) a pilot ECD project in response to growing evidence that many young children

in Addis Ababa, particularly those from low-income households, are starting school without adequate language and literacy foundations. Findings from the African Center for Early Childhood Development (ACECD), using the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA), revealed that four-year-old children scored lowest in the language and literacy domain, underscoring the urgent need for early and intentional literacy stimulation.

The ECD Project was designed to address this gap by supporting children aged 0–6 at a critical stage of development, when early language exposure, shared reading, and nurturing environments have the greatest long-term impact. Recognizing that young children’s learning is shaped not only at home but also through health and community systems, the project takes a holistic approach, combining access to quality age appropriate books, literacy-friendly public spaces, and strengthened parental coaching.

Project Focus and Approach

The project aims to strengthen early language, literacy, and socio-emotional development by:

- increasing access to culturally and linguistically appropriate children’s books for 0-6 age ;
- creating safe, welcoming reading environments within public health facilities; and
- Building the capacity of parent coach supervisors and coordinators to promote shared reading as a foundational parenting practice.

By embedding literacy into existing public health and parenting support systems, the project lays the groundwork for sustainable, system-level impact that reaches families where they already access services.

Key achievements and project progress in 2025

(A) High-Quality Children's Book Development

Between August and October 2025, Ethiopia Reads led a rigorous book development and selection process involving ER literacy experts, local children book writers and illustrators, and ECD specialists. More than 40 titles were reviewed following targeted training for writers and illustrators, resulting in the selection of 10 good-quality, developmentally appropriate titles. To ensure the books truly resonated with young children and their caregivers, two rounds of pre-testing were conducted with families at Gebeta Children's Community Library and Signal Woreda 07 Health Center. Children eagerly interacted with the stories while caregivers shared honest feedback on content, language, and usability. The process revealed strong child engagement, high caregiver acceptance, and a clear need for durable board books that can withstand everyday use by little hands. By listening closely to children and families, Ethiopia Reads ensured that the final books are not only educational, but also culturally meaningful, enjoyable, and practical for daily reading at home and in community spaces.

(B) Local Printing and Book Production (Ongoing)



In October 2025, Ethiopia Reads signed a contract with local Printing Firm to produce 20,000 children's books, marking the first domestic mass production of board books in Ethiopia. By the end of the year, more than 6,500 copies across four titles had

been completed. While board book production is more time-intensive due to strict quality standards, Ethiopia Reads adjusted timelines, introduced phased distribution plans, and maintained close quality monitoring to safeguard overall project outcomes. Full-scale printing and distribution will continue into 2026.

(C) Instructional Videos (Ongoing)

To support parent coaches and supervisors in promoting quality shared reading with young children, the project adapted instructional animation videos from the World Bank Group's *Read@Home* resources for local use. These videos demonstrate practical techniques for meaningful shared reading at home and in reading corners. An Amharic voice-over draft was completed and pre-tested in December 2025 with stakeholders and parental coaching staff. Feedback was highly positive, highlighting the videos' clarity, inclusivity, and practical relevance. Technical refinements informed by this feedback are being incorporated into the final production phase to ensure the videos are accessible, engaging, and effective for families and caregivers.

(D) Establishing Reading Corners in Health Facilities (Ongoing)

WHY This Matters;

- 📖 Children who are read to early are more likely to succeed in school
- 📖 Parents gain confidence as their child's first teacher
- 📖 Health facilities become learning spaces—not just service points

Another key milestone of the project is the establishment of child-friendly reading corners within public health facilities—one in each of the 11 sub-cities. Baseline assessments conducted in health facility playrooms revealed limited access to literacy materials, space constraints, and organizational challenges that restricted opportunities for early reading. In response, Ethiopia Reads worked closely with the Bureau of Health (BoH) and SPMD to design three flexible reading corner models; large, medium, and small tailored to different facility sizes and contexts. Due to space limitations, four health centers were replaced with more suitable sites. By December 2025, a local furniture producer had been engaged to develop prototype reading corners, with installation planned for early 2026, creating welcoming spaces where young children and caregivers can read and learn together while accessing health services such as vaccination.

(D) Capacity Building for Parent Coach Supervisors (Preparatory Phase)

In parallel, baseline assessments of parent coach supervisors and coordinators were completed in October 2025 to better understand their knowledge, awareness, and practices related to early literacy and shared reading with young children. The findings highlighted a strong need to strengthen practical, skills-based competencies. In response, Ethiopia Reads began designing a targeted training module for the upcoming Training of Trainers (ToT), equipping supervisors and coordinators with the skills needed to effectively cascade early literacy practices to parental coaches. Assessment tools were revised to better capture practical application, with follow-up baseline assessments planned for January 2026. Due to book production timelines, the ToT sessions were rescheduled and are now planned for March 2026, following the initial distribution of children's books.

Looking Ahead to 2026

From August to December 2025, the ECD Project successfully completed its foundational phase, laying strong technical, material, and system-level groundwork for long-term impact. While some activities will continue into 2026 due to the project's commitment to quality; particularly in book production, careful planning and mitigation measures ensured steady progress and sustained momentum.

In 2026, the project will move into its implementation and scale-up phase, focusing on expanded book production and distribution, finalization of digital learning resources, installation of reading corners in participating health facilities, and delivery of comprehensive capacity-building trainings for parent coach supervisors and coordinators. Together, these efforts will strengthen early literacy ecosystems and empower families to nurture children's language, learning, and emotional development from the very earliest years.

7. Digital Storybooks Partnership with iCog Technology

In 2025, Ethiopia Reads strengthened its commitment to innovation in children's literacy through a renewed partnership with iCog Technology, which was the second collaboration between the two organizations. This partnership reflects a shared vision to expand access to quality, locally developed reading materials through digital platforms.

Under this initiative, Ethiopia Reads led the development and production of four original children's storybook titles, drawing on the expertise of its authors, literacy specialists, and content developers to ensure the stories are age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and aligned with early reading needs. iCog Technology, in turn, is responsible for transforming the stories into digital formats and making them available as open-source resources, increasing their reach and accessibility.

The project is scheduled for completion in early 2026, at which point the digital storybooks will be publicly accessible and available for use by children, educators, libraries, and literacy programs. By combining ER's content expertise with iCog's technological capacity, this collaboration demonstrates how cross-sector partnerships can harness digital innovation to promote reading and learning opportunities for children across Ethiopia.

8. Conflict affected Areas Project

Response - Recovery - Resilience for Conflict - Affected Communities in Ethiopia Project (3R-4-CACE) Tigray Project-

This project builds on the success of the 3R-4-CACE Project implemented in 2024 across four conflict-affected regions—Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar. Funded by the World Bank through the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the initiative was implemented by Ethiopia Reads (ER) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), Regional and Woreda Education Bureaus, and Open Hearts Big Dreams Foundation. The project was designed in response to severe learning disruptions caused by conflict, with the goal of supporting early-grade learning recovery

by expanding access to high-quality, culturally relevant reading materials while strengthening education system capacity at regional and local levels.

The overall goal of the project was to improve the availability and accessibility of high-quality children's reading resources in the languages used as the medium of instruction in primary schools in the Tigray Region. Specifically, the project sought to design, print, and deliver 9,360 bilingual (Tigrinya–English) storybooks; strengthen the professional capacity of regional and woreda education supervisors through Training of Trainers (ToT); and systematically document and report on the implementation process. The project represented the second phase of a broader national intervention, following earlier implementation in Afar, Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and Oromia regions. Under this phase, 78 pre-primary and primary schools across 14 woredas in Tigray were targeted, with each school receiving 120 books comprising four carefully selected titles to support early-grade literacy.

The project was implemented over a five-month period, from August to December 2025. Core activities included the printing and distribution of storybooks in line with strict quality standards, the delivery of Training of Trainers for education supervisors, systematic follow-up to verify book delivery and training plans, and continuous coordination and reporting to relevant stakeholders. Major deliverables included the production of multiple bilingual storybook titles, the development and printing of complementary reading support materials, rigorous book sorting, packaging, and delivery processes, capacity-building training for Regional and Woreda Education Bureau supervisors, and ongoing liaison and reporting to the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education.

From a strategic perspective, the project utilized Ready Set Go bilingual picture books developed by Open Hearts Big Dreams, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization specializing in high-quality children's literature. The selected titles were translated into Tigrinya and English and underwent a comprehensive technical review and approval process by the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus. The books were evaluated for linguistic accuracy, curriculum alignment, cultural relevance, and age

appropriateness, and were officially endorsed through documented approval letters. Each school received four approved titles—30 copies per title—ensuring sufficient materials for classroom use and shared reading activities. The books addressed foundational literacy themes such as language development, numeracy, social relationships, cultural identity, resilience, and environmental awareness, supporting both academic and social-emotional learning.

Following the formal agreement with the Ministry of Finance, Ethiopia Reads coordinated the selection of qualified printing service providers. Heritage Printing Press and Beminet Printing were competitively contracted to produce the storybooks within an agreed one-month timeframe. Throughout the printing phase, Ethiopia Reads maintained close technical supervision, including regular site visits and frequent quality assurance checks focusing on paper quality, color consistency, and image clarity. Any deviations were promptly documented and corrected to ensure compliance with agreed specifications. In parallel, reading support cards were printed to complement the storybooks, providing practical guidance on interactive reading strategies, discussion prompts, and child engagement techniques.

Upon completion of printing, all materials were delivered to the Ethiopia Reads warehouse, where a systematic verification, counting, and sorting process was conducted by a dedicated team. Books were organized by title and language, packaged into cartons of 120 books per school, and clearly labeled to support accurate inventory management. The Ministry of Finance conducted an independent verification of quantities before approving final packing and authorizing distribution. The Ministry of Finance subsequently facilitated the transportation and delivery of the books to the 14 targeted woredas and schools.

In addition to material distribution, the project placed strong emphasis on capacity building through a two-day Training of Trainers program held in Mekelle. Nineteen education supervisors from 14 woredas participated in the training, which focused on early childhood development, book-centered learning, storytelling, and effective read-aloud practices. The training combined theoretical foundations with practical application,

enabling participants to develop skills in interactive questioning, picture walks, oral language development, and classroom-based literacy strategies. Sessions were facilitated by experienced Early Childhood Development experts and Ethiopia Reads trainers, using participatory methodologies, group work, demonstrations, and peer learning to enhance engagement and retention.

The training also addressed the role of libraries, collaboration among education stakeholders, professional development, and advocacy for literacy. Participants reflected on local challenges, shared experiences, and developed actionable plans to cascade the training to teachers, librarians, and school leaders in their respective woredas. Practical read-aloud demonstrations in local languages reinforced learning and built participants' confidence in applying the approaches in real classroom contexts. To support follow-up and coordination, Ethiopia Reads established a dedicated communication platform to facilitate ongoing guidance, experience sharing, and monitoring.

The project holds significant importance for education recovery in conflict-affected areas. By providing bilingual, age-appropriate reading materials, it directly addressed learning loss and supported continuity of education despite prolonged disruptions. The focus on mother-tongue instruction enhanced comprehension, inclusion, and cultural relevance, while the Training of Trainers approach strengthened the capacity of education professionals to use materials effectively and sustainably. Beyond academic outcomes, the project contributed to social and emotional recovery by promoting safe, engaging learning environments and restoring a sense of normalcy for children and educators.

Despite its overall success, the project encountered challenges, primarily related to approval delays and contextual instability, which affected the original timeline. The Training of Trainers sessions were postponed from November to December due to political and scheduling constraints. Nevertheless, these challenges were managed through close coordination and adaptive planning, and all planned activities and outputs were ultimately completed.

In conclusion, the project was successfully implemented and achieved all its intended objectives within the available resources and timeframe. Strong collaboration among stakeholders, rigorous quality assurance, and a balanced focus on both materials and capacity building ensured high-quality outputs and meaningful outcomes. The initiative not only reduced learning loss and strengthened early literacy in the Tigray Region but also generated valuable lessons to inform future education interventions in emergency and post-conflict settings. Overall, the project stands as a significant contribution to educational recovery, system strengthening, and long-term learning resilience in vulnerable communities of Ethiopia.

9. Book Donation and Library support

In 2025, Ethiopia Reads expanded access to reading materials by strengthening school and community libraries through a strategic matching grant initiative and book donations. These efforts were designed to maximize impact by encouraging investment for book purchases in schools while ensuring children have access to age-appropriate, engaging, and inclusive reading resources.

Through the matching grant initiative, Ethiopia Reads partnered with three primary schools in Addis Ababa; Bole Addis, Addis Raey, and Kelemamba Primary School; to jointly invest in their libraries. The schools contributed a total of **ETB 16,000**, which Ethiopia Reads matched in full. This shared investment enabled the procurement of carefully selected reference materials based on the new education curriculum and children's storybooks tailored to the learning needs and interests of students, directly improving daily reading opportunities for hundreds of children.

In addition, Ethiopia Reads also provided targeted library support to Enat and Eyerusalem Primary Schools, supplying a diverse range of reading materials, including books by local authors, imported children's titles, and specialized resources such as RSG and Braille books. This inclusive approach ensured that children with visual impairments could access and enjoy meaningful reading experiences.

Collectively, these investments strengthened the quality, diversity, and inclusivity of school libraries, transforming them into more vibrant learning spaces. By combining donor support with school-level commitment, Ethiopia Reads increased the availability of books and helping more children develop foundational reading skills and a lasting love of books.

A breakdown of the books procured and distributed in 2025 is presented in the table below.

Description	Total no of books donated	Total no of Schools /libraries received
Imported books	9,887	36
Reprinted books	1,100	12
Local books purchased	2,716	27
RSG books	9,987 including MOF Tigray Project	87
Braille books	125	11
Total Books donated in 2025	23,815	173

II. Professional Development

Capacity Building Workshop: by Mexico-Spanish Cooperation

Libraries Empowering Communities

In November 2025, Ethiopia Reads proudly coordinated and participated in a five-day Capacity Building Workshop held at the ECA compound (17–21 November), organized in

collaboration with the Spain and Mexico federations and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Ethiopia Reads supported the nomination and registration of selected librarians, including a librarian from ER's Gebeta Library, ensuring direct organizational participation and learning.

The workshop brought together librarians and information professionals from Ethiopia and beyond for hands-on, practical training led by expert facilitators from Mexico. Sessions focused on community-centered library services, children's programming, modern librarianship, knowledge governance, and outreach strategies, encouraging participants to rethink libraries as dynamic knowledge and community hubs rather than traditional book-lending spaces. Interactive exercises, including SWOT analyses of participants' own libraries, helped translate global best practices into local action.

The program was officially opened by Ms. Irene Olyancha, Chief of Knowledge Management Services at UNECA, setting an inspiring tone for a week dedicated to collaboration, innovation, and partnership. High-level engagement continued throughout the week, with contributions from Mr. Aboubakri Diaw, Chief of Staff at UNECA, who emphasized placing youth at the center of innovation, and Mr. Isaias Noguez, Deputy Ambassador of Mexico to Ethiopia, who reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to South–South and triangular cooperation.



The workshop concluded with moments of recognition, cultural exchange, and shared reflection, including certificates of participation and a joint visit to Abrihot Library. By the end of the week, participants left energized, connected, and better equipped to strengthen library services and expand access to knowledge in their communities. Ethiopia Reads is honored to have contributed to this impactful international collaboration and looks forward to applying the learning to its ongoing library and literacy initiatives.

Librarian Discussion Platform

Strengthening School Libraries through Shared Learning



The Librarian Discussion Platform continued to stand out in 2025 as one of Ethiopia Reads' most meaningful and practical experience sharing and capacity-building program. Designed specifically for school librarians, language teachers, and school administrators within ER network schools in Addis Ababa and Hawassa, the platform creates a safe and collaborative space for experience sharing, professional reflection, and professional development.

In 2025, four discussion sessions were successfully held, two in Hawassa and two in Addis Ababa. Overall, 31 network schools, 22 in Addis Ababa and 8 in Hawassa, took part in the sessions, benefiting 155 educators through experience sharing and capacity-building activities. Each session combined short, focused professional development training led by invited experts with peer-to-peer experience sharing, allowing participants to reflect on their own school library practices, identify challenges, and learn from one another's successes.

One of the most impactful sessions of the year was the final Addis Ababa Librarian Discussion, hosted at Addis Meraf Primary School Library. The event brought together representatives from 22 ER network schools, including librarians, language teachers, and school directors, reinforcing the platform's role as a bridge between classroom practice, library services, and school leadership.

The first part of the meeting focused on professional development and was facilitated by Dr. Mengistu, a lecturer at Debre Birhan University and a pioneer in reading pedagogy and initiatives such as reading clinics. His session guided participants through rich and reflective discussions on key literacy concepts, including reading comprehension, learners' prior knowledge, and the critical distinction between "learning to read" and "reading to learn." Participants also explored effective reading pedagogy, the science of reading, alphabet learning through sound, result-oriented reading strategies, and the use of metacognitive strategies to deepen students' understanding.

Beyond theory, the session encouraged participants to reflect on their own classroom and library practices. Librarians and teachers openly shared challenges, asked questions, and exchanged practical strategies, creating a collaborative learning environment rooted in real-world experience. This open dialogue reinforced the importance of continuous professional development and collective problem-solving in strengthening school library and reading programs.

The second part of the meeting focused on experience sharing and school-level discussions, providing an important communication platform between ER and participating schools. Schools shared updates on their library implementation, ongoing challenges, and emerging needs. Ethiopia Reads, in turn, presented actions taken following previous librarian discussions. This follow-up process strengthened aligned expectations, and encouraged participants to remain actively engaged in future sessions.

Overall, the Librarian Discussion Platform has proven to be more than a meeting, it is a living learning community. By combining expert input, peer learning, and structured

follow-up, Ethiopia Reads continues to empower librarians and educators to improve reading instruction, strengthen school libraries, and create more supportive reading environments for children across its network schools.

III. Advocacy and Campaigns

The 5th Annual National Children’s Reading Summit

“Cultivating a Nation of Readers: Inspiring Parental Involvement and Cultural Storytelling for Early Childhood Literacy,”



One of the major milestones of 2025 was Ethiopia Reads’ successful organization of the **5th Annual Reading Summit**, held on April 2–3, 2025, at the Sapphire Hotel in Addis Ababa. Convened under the theme *“Cultivating a Nation of Readers: Inspiring Parental Involvement and Cultural Storytelling for Early Childhood Literacy,”* the summit brought together more than 100 participants, including government officials, educators, researchers, authors, development partners, NGOs, and literacy advocates. The event provided a national platform for dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning among stakeholders committed to advancing early childhood literacy, with particular attention to emergency and underserved contexts.

Throughout the two-day summit, discussions highlighted the critical role of early reading in children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Participants emphasized that promoting literacy goes beyond providing books—it requires nurturing supportive, culturally responsive environments at home, in schools, and within communities. Through keynote presentations, panel discussions, experience-sharing sessions, and book exhibitions, participants examined persistent challenges in early literacy, shared research findings and practical experiences, and explored innovative approaches to parental engagement and cultural storytelling. A strong call for coordinated, system-wide action echoed throughout the discussions, underscoring the need to move away from fragmented literacy interventions.

The summit opened with high-level remarks from senior representatives of Ethiopia Reads, the Ministry of Education, and Ethiopian Libraries and Archives Services, who reaffirmed the national importance of early literacy, storytelling traditions, and expanded access to pre-primary education. Technical sessions addressed topics such as the state of early childhood education in Ethiopia, literacy assessment findings, oral language development, and the impact of crises on learning systems. Evidence presented during the summit highlighted both progress made and critical gaps that remain in literacy outcomes, learning environments, and teacher capacity.

In addition to policy and research dialogue, the summit showcased practical innovations and partnerships, including digital storybook platforms, national reading networks, and accelerated learning initiatives for internally displaced children, and inclusive literacy programs for children with disabilities. A book fair and exhibition created space for authors, publishers, and organizations to promote culturally relevant children's literature and strengthen collaboration across the literacy ecosystem.

The summit concluded with a recognition ceremony honoring individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to promoting reading culture and supporting children affected by crisis. Participants left with a renewed commitment to strengthen collaboration, influence policy and practice, and sustain collective efforts to cultivate a nation of readers.

Overall, the 5th Annual Reading Summit had a significant achievement in 2025, confirming Ethiopia Reads' leadership in convening diverse stakeholders, shaping national literacy dialogue, and advancing early childhood literacy across Ethiopia. The next and the 6th summit is planned to take place in March, 2026 G.C.

Children's Reading Festivals: Hawassa and Dire Dawa Reading Festivals

Ethiopia Reads successfully organized two major Children's Reading Festivals in Hawassa and Dire Dawa this year, bringing together children, families, educators, government institutions, and development partners to celebrate reading and learning. Designed to promote early grade literacy and nurture a lifelong love of books, the festivals highlighted the essential role of reading in children's academic success, emotional well-being, and social development. Extensive preparation, including stakeholder coordination, content design, volunteer mobilization, and logistical planning, ensured that both festivals were inclusive, engaging, and impactful.

The Hawassa Reading Festival, held on May 3–4, 2025 at Hawassa Stadium, marked its second successful edition and attracted more than 2,000 participants, including students, parents, educators, community members, and senior city officials. The event reflected strong collaboration between Ethiopia Reads, the Hawassa City Administration Education Department, HRC network schools, and local partners. Over two days, children participated in a wide range of literacy-focused and creative activities, including storytelling, reading competitions, art and drawing sessions, educational games, drama, music, and free reading. Recognition ceremonies honored parents, teachers, librarians, and school leaders who have played an outstanding role in fostering a culture of reading. The active involvement of community elders, universities, volunteers, and local organizations strengthened community ownership and reinforced reading as a shared responsibility across the city.

The Dire Dawa Children's Reading Festival, organized in partnership with the French Embassy in Ethiopia and Alliance Ethio-Française Dire Dawa, engaged 550 Grade 3 and 4 students from 10 schools, along with teachers, parents, community members, and senior government officials. The festival was preceded by a vibrant



citywide awareness walk led by the Dire Dawa Education Bureau marching band and officially opened with the national anthem. Over two days, children took part in diverse and engaging activities, including bilingual storytelling in Amharic and French, poetry recitals, reading and academic competitions, art and game corners, circus performances, educational drama, and interactive music sessions. A temporary children's library provided direct access to quality reading materials, while donated books enriched local school and community collections.

Beyond children's activities, the Dire Dawa festival incorporated a capacity-building training component for teachers, librarians, and school leaders, focusing on effective library management and evidence-based read-aloud practices. Strong media coverage and the participation of high-level officials, including the Ambassador of France to Ethiopia, further amplified advocacy for early literacy and bilingual education.

Overall, the Hawassa and Dire Dawa Reading Festivals showed how powerful reading initiatives can be when communities work together. The festivals brought children, families, schools, government institutions, and partners into one shared space, creating joyful and inclusive experiences around books and learning. The high level of participation, positive feedback, and clear educational and social benefits highlight the importance of making reading festivals a regular and expanded platform to nurture a strong reading culture and support children's holistic development across Ethiopia.

ER Partnerships in 2025

Ethiopia Reads Partnerships – 2025	
Partner Type	Entities
Government & Regional Bodies	Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Regional & Woreda Education Bureaus, NADA, Abrhot Library, schools, community libraries, Culture and tourism bureaus, Addis Ababa City administration SPMO
Donors and philanthropies	World Bank, Van Leer Foundation, French Embassy, individual donors, BAI , AGI
Educational Content & Book Development	Open Hearts Big Dreams , local writers, illustrators, icog technology, BCL team
Literacy & Advocacy Networks	National Reading Network members, Summit participants, educators, Hawassa TIC, Hawassa and A.A Universities, Ethiopian Science Academy , Ye Ethiopia Lijoch children media, Writers association
Broader Literacy Collaborators	Rotary clubs, Rotaract clubs , book advocacy groups (e.g., IBBY), World voice association, publishers, event organizers, medias , Mexico and Spanish Cooperation

Establishment of Ethiopia Reads UK- 2025

Ethiopia Reads (ER) made a significant strategic expansion by establishing Ethiopia Reads **UK**, led by volunteers Mrs. **Helen Papworth** and Mr. **Charlie**. This milestone marks ER's first major international office dedicated to strengthening global support for children's literacy in Ethiopia and connecting with a broader network of donors, partners, and literacy advocates.

Since its inception, the ER UK has successfully gathered a dedicated group of trustees and supporters who bring diverse expertise in education, publishing, and international development. It has held consecutive strategic meetings to define its objectives, governance structure, and initial projects. These meetings have been instrumental in aligning the UK team's vision with ER's mission of promoting early childhood literacy and equitable access to books for children across Ethiopia.

It is currently planning its first flagship project: the production of Ethiopian comic books. This project aims to create engaging, culturally relevant, and visually rich comic books that resonate with children, encourage a love for reading, and showcase Ethiopian stories and heritage. By investing in local content creation, ER UK seeks to support Ethiopian authors, illustrators, and publishers while fostering literacy and creativity among young readers.

This expansion into the UK not only strengthens ER's global network but also enhances its capacity to mobilize resources, advocate for Ethiopian children's literacy internationally, and implement innovative projects that directly impact Ethiopian children's reading experiences. The UK Branch represents a strategic step in scaling ER's mission in Europe.

Ethiopia Reads – 2025 Key Metrics Summary		
Program / Activity	Indicator	2025 Figures
Gebeta Children's Community Library	Total registered users	125 children
	Total visits	2,196 visits
	Male users	49
	Female users	76
Gebeta Summer Camp	Children reached	120 children
	Volunteers engaged	48 volunteers
Hawassa Reading Center (HRC)	Total annual visits	4,973 visits
	Male users	2,972
	Female users	2,001
HRC Summer Camp	Total participants	155 children
	Girls	70
	Boys	85
HRC Christmas Celebration	Total participants	250 children
Old Donkey Mobile Library (DML)	Total children reached	2,260 children
	In-school children	1,600
	Out-of-school children	660
New Donkey Mobile Library (DML)	Total children served	876 children
	Male users	408
	Female users	468
Horse Powered Literacy (HPL)	Total children reached	2,872 children

ECD Project	Children's book titles selected	10 titles
	Books printed (by end of 2025)	6,500+ copies
	Planned total production	20,000 copies
	Health facilities targeted for establishment of reading corners	11 facilities
	Health facilities targeted for book distributions	108
Conflict-Affected Areas Project (Tigray)	Schools supported	78 schools
	Woredas covered	14 woredas
	Storybooks distributed	3,360 books
	Supervisors trained (ToT)	10 supervisors
Book Donation & Library Support	Imported books donated	9,887
	Reprinted books	1,100
	Local books purchased	2,716
	RSG books	9,987
	Braille books	125
Librarian Discussion Platform	Sessions held	4 sessions
	Schools participating	31 schools
	Educators reached	155 educators
Annual Reading Summit (5th)	Participants	100+ participants
Children's Reading Festivals	Hawassa festival participants	2,000+
	Dire Dawa students reached	550 students
	Schools involved (Dire Dawa)	10 schools

Recommendations and Strategic Priorities in 2026

Based on program implementation experiences, emerging opportunities, and organizational growth needs identified in 2025, Ethiopia Reads proposes the following strategic recommendations to guide decision-making and institutional strengthening in the coming years.

1. Supporting the expansion of Reading Centers in Dire Dawa



Ethiopia Reads should consider establishing an additional reading center modeled after the successful Hawassa Reading Center (HRC), with Dire Dawa city identified as a priority location. The city hosts a newly constructed large public library modeled to Abrehot Library in Addis Ababa and serves a high concentration of schools and students. There is a clear need for leadership in designing, managing, and activating the children's section of the library. Ethiopia Reads' technical expertise in child-centered library design, programming, and community engagement positions the organization well to fill this gap and respond to strong demand from children, schools, and local stakeholders.

2. Scale-Up of the Mobile Library Initiative in Addis Ababa

Ethiopia Reads should strengthen and expand its mobile library initiative within Addis Ababa to reach children in underserved urban communities with limited access to reading spaces and books. Building on lessons learned from the existing mobile library models, this initiative can significantly increase outreach, visibility, and equity in access to literacy services, particularly for children living in densely populated or informal settlements.

3. Diversification of Funding Sources

To ensure long-term sustainability and growth, Ethiopia Reads should actively expand its donor base and grant portfolio. This includes identifying new institutional donors, international foundations, embassies, corporate social responsibility (CSR) partners, and multilateral funding opportunities. Proactive grant scanning, proposal development, and donor relationship management should be prioritized to reduce reliance on limited funding streams and support program scale-up.

4. Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

As the organization grows in scale and complexity, Ethiopia Reads should significantly strengthen its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems. This includes hiring a dedicated MEL professional to lead data collection, analysis, reporting, and learning processes across all programs. Strong MEL capacity will enhance accountability, improve program quality, generate evidence of impact, and strengthen donor confidence.

5. Development of a Long-Term Strategic Plan

Ethiopia Reads should develop a five- to ten-year strategic plan to guide organizational growth, program prioritization, and resource mobilization. This document will provide a clear vision, mission alignment, strategic objectives, and implementation roadmap. In addition to guiding internal decision-making, a formal strategic plan is a critical requirement for many funders and partners and will strengthen Ethiopia Reads' positioning for large-scale funding opportunities.

6. Establishment of a Strong and Focused Fundraising Team and PR Professional

To support expanded programming and sustainability goals, Ethiopia Reads should establish a dedicated and focused fundraising team. This team would focus on donor cultivation, grant writing, partnerships, individual giving, and fundraising campaigns. A

structured fundraising function will enable the organization to pursue ambitious growth targets while maintaining program quality.

7. Establishment of a Business Wing /Income Generating Activity/

Ethiopia Reads should take a strategic step toward establishing a business or social enterprise wing that aligns with its mission. Potential opportunities may include book sales, training services, consulting on library design, content development, or literacy programming. A business wing would generate unrestricted income, reduce dependency on donor funding, and contribute to long-term financial resilience.

8. Investment in Organizational Infrastructure

To support effective program delivery and staff mobility, Ethiopia Reads should prioritize the purchase of an organizational vehicle for official use. A dedicated vehicle will improve operational efficiency, reduce long-term transportation costs, and enable timely monitoring, coordination, and partner engagement across program locations.

Collectively, these recommendations reflect Ethiopia Reads' transition from a program-focused organization to a strategically positioned, system-strengthening institution. Board guidance, leadership, and support will be essential in advancing these priorities and ensuring the organization's continued growth, sustainability, and impact.

Conclusion

In 2025, Ethiopia Reads continued to demonstrate that meaningful change in children's literacy begins with access, consistency, and community engagement. Through innovative mobile libraries, vibrant reading centers, targeted school support, and inclusive learning programs, the organization reached thousands of children who would otherwise have limited opportunities to read, learn, and grow. Even in the face of financial constraints, school closures, and geographic barriers, Ethiopia Reads remained a reliable source of learning and hope for children and families. The year's

achievements reflect the strength of collaboration, the dedication of staff and volunteers, and the trust of partners and communities. As Ethiopia Reads moves forward, it remains committed to deepening impact, expanding reach, and ensuring that every child regardless of location or circumstance has the opportunity to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Property of Ethiopia Reads