

## **Community-University Partnership Gedam Sefer Project**

**Summary of Activities from November 1, 2007 –January 5, 2008**

November 30, 2007

### **Debriefing Meeting with the Kebele Care Taker Administration**

#### **Agenda**

1. The importance of University-Community Partnership
2. Re-briefing the Partnership activities conducted by the AAU School of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago, the Kebele 03/09 administration and the Gedam-Sefer Community
3. Short term and long term plans by the Partnership.
4. Other relevant issues

The meeting started at 9:00 AM by introducing the name and responsibilities of each participant.

#### **Agenda 1. The Importance of University-Community Partnership**

Prof. Alice K. Johnson Butterfield and Ato Wassie Kebede briefed the importance of Community-University Partnership and its contribution to community development in building the capacity of the community members and university students. Both emphasized that such practice is perhaps the first of its kind in Ethiopia. They stated that such partnerships have contributed a lot in Europe and America. The teaching institutions learn at grassroots levels what their capacities/assets could contribute to development. At the same time, the community could explore its assets for its own development and look what it may lack from other external sources.

They both explained that Community-University Partnership is different from Non-Governmental Organizations activities. The NGOs bring projects and project activities earmarked specifically with detailed budget, activities and plans; whereas the Partnership program primarily focuses on building the community members capacities by giving trainings and at the same time by learning from the community. The partnership would explore the communities' assets and looks together with community members for solutions to the communities' problems. It prioritizes the needs of the community members. The partnership would build the capacity of the community members to come out with the community's own project ideas. All the activities will depend on the capacity and commitment of the community members.

#### **Agenda 2. Re-briefing the Partnership activities conducted by the AAU School of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago, the Kebele 03/09 administration and the Gedam-Sefer Community**

Prof. Butterfield and Ato Wassie re-briefed to the new Kebele 03/09 Care-taker administration officials the tasks performed by the School of Social Work Masters Students since 2004. They informed the new officials the studies conducted in group and individual Masters Research thesis.

Ato Negassa (the former kebele administration official) explained for the new kebele care-taker officials, how the kebele administration and the AAU School of Social Work students were working in harmony. He also explained that the study results were discussed by the kebele, community members, other government offices and NGO representatives within the kebele. Ato Negassa recalled that by the time the study was conducted, there were 800 female-headed households; and from these 100 female-headed households were selected for the Asset Based Community Development study. Then 30 female-headed households were selected for the MS thesis. All these studies lead to the Community-University Partnership formation process.

The Community-University partnership has a core-group comprising 19 members; among these a technical committee comprising 7 members is formed.

Prof. Butterfield and Ato Wassie admired the commitment of both the Kebele Administration and the community members in facilitating and cooperating during the study and the partnership formation process.

**Agenda 3. Short term and long term plans by the Partnership.**

**3.1 Short term plans**

3.1.1 Prof. Butterfield and Ato Wassie explained to the new Kebele 03/09 care-takers that in order to further continue the partnership activities the project needs a space to serve as an office. And this space should be provided by the Kebele administration as a share of the community for the partnership.

3.1.2. One project coordinator is hired and the project would employ one female and one male community outreach workers who have completed high school and who are residents of the kebele 03/09.

3.1.3 Four MSW students will be assigned to do their field work practice provided they do their Masters Thesis on women and children in the Gedam Sefer (kebele 03/09)

**3.2. Long term plans**

3.2.1. Capacity building trainings to the Community members on Asset Based Community members will be given consecutively.

3.2.2. Doctoral students will also be assigned to do their research in the Gedam Sefer.

3.2.3 If the community comes out with its own projects, such as community library establishment, the partnership program, then the University of Illinois will discuss the issue with the “Books for Africa” and bring some books that could serve the community. These books could serve both elementary, high school students and the community members.

All the participants (the new care-taker kebele 03/09 officials) expressed their willingness to facilitate the partnership project. After legally supportive documents are produced by the AAU School of social work; the kebele 03/09 administration pledged to delegate the Education and Health desk to facilitate all support to partnership’s activities. But hesitated that the possibilities of facilitating an office will be a difficult task for them since they do not have ample space, but promised to explore the possibilities together.

**Agenda 4. Legal issues**

The new kebele-care taker officials asked the University to produce a tripartite agreement and also a letter from the University stating the partnership. The document should clearly state the short and long term plans; and also the responsibilities and obligations of each entity (AAU University, University of Illinois Chicago, the Kebele Administration and the Gedam Sefer Community.

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January 12<sup>th</sup> 2008

**Engagement discussion with Mehal Gedam Car Washers Association**

The Mehal Gedam Car Washers Association is organized in May 2007 with a total membership of 23 with 18 male and 5 female members. But now its membership has increased to 65 (with 54 males and 11 females). According to the members, forty percent of the members are ex-convicts who admit that their past experience was unacceptable by all standards, but now are ready to be healthy and peaceful productive citizens. What they need is positive attitudinal and material support from government officials and the community at large. Their association has a written by law. They have submitted a document to the kebele administration and government offices to be registered as an association and have a legal status, but still waiting for approval.

Up to now they earn their income by washing cars and also parking cars at night (guarding) within their neighborhood. But since their association is not registered as a legal entity their customers are very few. If the kebele gives them a legal status and secure them a plot of land within their neighborhood or elsewhere, they are aspiring to continue their car washing and parking services in organized manner.

The participants were briefed that the Gedam Sefer University Community Partnership do not have a project nor budget for projects, but all the projects, activities, and other relevant details are going to be designed and prepared by them. They have to identify their strengths, assets and gaps. They have to prioritize their needs and plan accordingly, on which they agree and are ready to work with the Community University partnership.

The Car Washers believe that they have strengths for their future development. They point out that the following are among the much strength that they have:-

- Attitudinal change to be ready to live by their toil
- They have rehabilitated themselves morally, and ready to be accepted by the community as a productive citizen.
- Devotion for the last seven months in following their appeals to the kebele officials to give their association a legal status and also grant them a plot of land is an asset by itself.
- Their association has bylaws governing their activities and responsibilities.
- They do not have an income to share for the last seven months, but are hoping to have the legal status and earn a living
- Motivated to work
- They have cleared the garbage in the area hoping that the place will be their source of income
- Each of them have their own different talents
- In addition to car washing and car parking services, they have future plans to include other income generating schemes.

The meeting participants agreed that they will work together with the partnership to bring change for themselves and to the community. Then, after they elected 4 members to serve as a Core Committee members and also attend the ABCD training.

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January 14<sup>th</sup> 2008

### **Engagement discussion with Sebara Babur Car Washers Association**

The Sebara Babur Car Washers Association is organized in November 2004 with a total membership of 29 out of school boys and but it has now 22 members. According to the members, their behavior before three years was unacceptable by the neighborhood. But after they establish the car washing and car parking (night guarding) services, their behavior and life has changed a lot. They say that they:

- appreciate the value and the results of being organized
- are grateful for the kebele administration for giving them land use right for 5 years, renewable.
- have legally registered association, with their own bylaws
- appreciate the value of time
- give respect to their work
- change their life style
- support themselves

- respect their family and neighborhood
- forbid smoking and chewing chat during working hours and in their work area
- try to give support to their parents and relatives financially during holydays
- are trying to improve their work
- are trying to share their experience to other out of school youth
- are confident that they are respected by the community and the neighborhood
- their customers are satisfied by their service, but are asking and advising them to upgrade their service, but are unable to do so since their financial capacity is limited

The meeting participants are briefed about the objective of the Community University Partnership and the research activities conducted by the Addis Ababa University School of Social Work Students and Professors. They expressed that what they need is an organization which could work with them and the other community members to improve their livelihood and the others.

They agreed that they will work together with the partnership. They elected unanimously four of their colleagues to represent them in the Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership and also take the ABCD training.

The meeting was friendly and I understand that the group has a bright future and also a vision. What they need is a little support in training and some cost-matching fund to purchase some equipment.

January 15<sup>th</sup> 2008

### **Engagement discussion with Garbage Collectors Association**

Two Garbage Collectors Association were invited to attend the community-university engagement discussion. They were Alem Tena Garbage Collectors Association and Denek Garbage Collectors Association.

1. Alem Tena Garbage Collectors Association is organized in 2004 with 6 males and 24 female members. But now the membership has decreased to 18 females. The reasons for membership withdrawal according to the members are less income, the work is energy and time consuming, etc. They collect dry garbage from residential houses three days a week and everyday from hotels, cafes and restaurants.

Their customers pay the service fares once a month. But now some of their customers are unwilling to pay. Because of this their income is decreasing. The garbage collection materials such as carts and spades are deteriorating and some are out of use.

2. Denek Garbage Collection Association is organized in 2003 with one female and four male members. In addition to garbage collection, they have tried to educate their customers on waste disposal and health problems associated to waste. In addition to its members, they hire garbage collectors as daily laborers based on their work load.

The members of the two garbage collection associations believe that they are giving a valuable service to the community and give respect to their work. But the income they earn is little. The garbage collection could not engage them full time. They wish if they could use their extra time in some other income generating activities. They also want to recycle the garbage and make it useful. But they lack the knowhow and a plot of land and shade to try this activity.

The meeting participants were briefed about the past three year activities by the AAU MSW students' community assessment and MSW thesis research. They were also briefed what the Community-University Partnership is meant and what the Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership has done so far and its future plans.

The participants were hoping that this (the Community-University Partnership) was a donor agency like others. But were clarified the partnership's motto is to equip the community with methods to identify its strengths, assets and gaps. Solutions for the community's gaps are to be sought together with the community members after identifying the community's strengths, assets and after prioritizing the community's gaps. This was out of their expectations. But, after a detailed discussion, they agreed to be part and parcel of the Gedam Sefer Community University Partnership. They elected three representatives to the Core Group and also attend the ABCD training to identify their strengths, assets and gaps to find solutions.

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January 19<sup>th</sup> 2008

### **Engagement discussion with Ketena 03 Garbage Collectors Associations**

The Ketena 03 Garbage Collectors Association is organized before 3 years with 10 female members. According to the members, the initiatives to form the garbage collection association came from their own will by observing females engagement from other areas. They started their garbage collection by registering customers within their neighborhood, and later on the Kebele supported them to have a legal status. The sub-city gave them 3 carts, the Christian Children's Fund also gave them some carts, spades, gowns, brushes, etc.

The members respect their duty and handle their customers according to their capacities and requests. They said that, since there are economic and other social burdens on their customers, they try to convince their customers that such burdens are felt also by themselves. Accordingly, they discuss and determine the service costs and fee collection dates on common understanding. They believe that they are giving a valuable service to the community and give respect to their work. Even though the income they earn is little, they said that it is fare by the present condition, since their customers could not pay more than what they pay them now.

The meeting participants were briefed about the past three year activities by the AAU MSW professors, students' community assessment and MSW thesis researches. They were briefed about the basic principles of the Community-University Partnership and what the Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership has done so far and its future plans.

The participants appreciated the principles of the Community-University Partnership, and what they want is an institution or group of people or individuals who could fill their gaps on building their knowledge and show them the directions for community development. They believe that they could work in a better condition if trained. They hope that the core committee and the technical committee of the partnership could support them after taking the ABCD training. The Ketena 03 garbage collection association members hope that this process is their additional support for their wellbeing. They agreed to be part and parcel of the Gedam Sefer Community University Partnership and elected two representatives to the Core Group and also attend the ABCD training to identify their strengths, assets and gaps to find solutions.

## **Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership Project December 2007 Report**

The Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership Action Research Project is on progress. This is a continuation of the MSW 1<sup>st</sup> batch students' community assessment and MSW research findings.

### **1. Recruitment of Community Out-Reach Workers.**

In order facilitate the ongoing action research, two community out-reach workers employment was facilitated. Vacancy announcements were posted. A total of 11 applicants submitted their documents; among these 7 fulfilled the criterion. Written exams were given, and 3 female and 3 male applicants were called for interview. The interview was conducted on December 25<sup>th</sup> 2007; with the collaboration of three PhD Social Work students. The community out-reach workers started work on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.

### **2. Finding Office Space**

The Keble 03 Kinder Garden director has promised a community meeting place and an office. But due to some administrative reasons it is difficult to get the permission now. It will take months. In due course we are using the cafes, tea rooms, school compounds to discuss our daily plans and to compile our reports. Different letters are submitted to two schools for possible cooperation. In the mean time we are using tea rooms and the Bethlehem Public School compound as our meeting and activity planning center.

### **3. On Going Action Research Project**

#### **Community Strength and Problem Identification Process.**

In order to identify the community's strengths (assets) and problems, we conducted meetings with different community members. The groups were children aged between seven and fourteen; youth between 15 and 30 years-old including the youth group engaged with car washing and parking services at night; and community elders, Idir leaders, women involved in food processing and garbage collection. While we tried to call these community members, there were good opportunities and challenges.

The opportunities were, our community out reach workers were former volunteers and employee of the Christian Children Fund. When they knock from house to house they were accepted positively assuming that they came again to facilitate children's schooling and other support. After they clarify their present mission, the parents and the children accepted our invitation positively. Idir leaders, some youth and women engaged with food processing and garbage collection also accepted our invitation positively. The willingness of the Bethlehem Public School administration to use their school to conduct meetings outside school hours is a good opportunity.

The major challenge was that we are trying to work on different ways than the NGO and government practice. The expectations of the community members (both who attended our meetings and the others who refused) is that we might have a defined project that might be out of their own interest; this will take time to convince them. Some also want immediate intervention and express their views that our activity will terminate without a tangible result.

Office facilities to plan and make consultation with community members without a fixed office makes it hard to convince some of the community members that we are serious and want to work with the community. But some of the elders and Idir leaders are appreciating the problem and are ready to work with us.

## **Community Strength and Problem Identification Meetings.**

As part of the ongoing action research project we conducted three consecutive meetings starting on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007 up to January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. (The summary is attached separately).

During the meetings all the participants expressed their ideas very actively. Their ideas were very constructive and show the community members readiness to work with us. They all expressed the community's strengths, assets and problems. They all agree that it is when there is a sense of ownership that all community development activities will be successful. It was so amazing and encouraging to see children expressing their and their community's strengths, assets and the gaps for their wellbeing and education.

Particularly, the children's and the Idir leaders request to conduct a series of such discussions are worth giving attention. The youth who are engaged with car washing and car parking service at night; and the women engaged with garbage collection seems that they have their own project ideas on how to improve their activities; they also have asked a separate discussion forums.

### **4. Tentative Plans for January and February.**

#### **4.1 Discussions with Idir Leaders**

Before conducting separate discussions, basic information on each Idir's establishment dates composition of membership (male and female) and if possible their activities in addition to funeral support activities will be gathered. After that, we will have consecutive meetings with volunteer Idir leaders. We have called 18 Idir leaders to the January 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, of which 10 have attended.

#### **4.2. Discussions with the two garbage collectors associations**

We will collect the basic information on their membership and conduct with them on their strengths, assets and problems to find out on how to improve their services and incomes.

The Keble 03 Kinder Garden director has promised a community meeting place and an office. I went several times to receive the room and renovate it, but she was unable to give us due to some misinterpretations by the KG school staff. They assumed our presence in the KG compound might be a threat and a cause to attract possible private investors to purchase the school. But I have clarified our motto is to help the community to identify the community's strengths, and work to fill the gaps together with the community members. Even our presence in the KG might be an additional input to the KG's improvement. I have submitted a letter of cooperation and a promissory note signed by the Social Work Assistant Dean to the Parents Committee. The majority are in favor of our project. I hope they might come out with concrete and affirmative decisions.

#### **4.3. Discussions with the Car Washing Youth Association leaders**

Basic data on their membership and their present status will be collected. At present we have found that there are seven car washing associations, of which two have volunteered and attended our meetings.

#### **4.4. Discussions with Children aged between 7 and 14**

We will call more children and conduct different meetings and come out with their own project ideas. It seems that by their first meeting, they suggest that they need some recreation facilities, additional tutorial classes, etc.

#### **4.5. Electing their own Core Committee members**

After digesting our ongoing action research objectives, we have agreed with the community members on the January 5<sup>th</sup> meetings to strengthen the present core and technical committee and be ready for the ABCD training.

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**The Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership  
Three Days Discussions Summary with Community members, Youth and Children  
December 27<sup>th</sup> 2007 up to January 5<sup>th</sup> 2008**

The Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership project activity conducted community discussion with the Addis Ababa University School of Social Works PhD students as an action research project. The discussion conducted with the community members (Idir leaders, elders, women and youth), children and youth (both in and out of school) identified their community's strengths, gaps and possible solutions.

**A. Gedam Sefer Community Strengths:**

1. Strong motivation of community members to be engaged in productive works
  - a. Youth and women are involved in woodwork, metal work, tailoring and income generating activities.
  - b. Women organized associations and are engaged in garbage collection and disposal; food processing and selling.
  - c. Youths trained in vocational skills training are exploring initial grants for productive works.
2. Women and youth who used to consider petty trading as marginal activity are now engaged in these small scale business activities.
3. Community members trained on income generating schemes and vocational skills by Christian Children's Fund and other organizations are ready to participate in any development activity.
4. Community members within the neighbourhood are giving care and support for orphans and vulnerable children who lost their parents to due HIV/AIDS.
5. Many youth who were drug addicts and juvenile delinquents have organized association with their own project ideas.
6. When a person in the neighbourhood is chronically ill or dies, the neighbours provide psychosocial support to the family.
7. There was a coalition of Idirs with the objective of community development and welfare; this can be remobilized to contribute to the development of its constituency.
8. Some Idirs support the elderly; and provide educational material support for orphan and vulnerable children.

**B. Gedam Sefer Community members gaps (weakness)**

1. Inability of families to provide support for the basic needs of children mainly due to poverty.
2. Families could not provide proper care, guidance and control to their children.
3. Loose relationship between parents and schools.
4. The projects of some NGOs have led the community to develop dependency syndrome.
5. Expansion of local liquor houses and drug/substance abuse like chat has exposed the youth to addictions and negatively affected their interest and motivation to productive works.
6. Youth members who are engaged in productive works lack regular skill upgrading training. There is skill gap to produce goods and services that are competitive in the local market.
7. Juvenile delinquency, petty theft, and insecure environment for children and girls.
8. Prevalence of pornographic and violent video films which parents and children watch is affecting the children's behaviour.



9. Street girls are sexually abused and are also use commercial sex as the means of survival. This is makes them vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy. This has resulted to the increase of street families and children.
10. Lack of youth centres like indoor and outdoor games, library, and other sport and recreational facilities.
11. Civic education at schools and the mass media do not teach children about their obligation, but focus only on their rights.
12. Large family size and congestion at household level.
13. Lack of moral and spiritual education for children particularly in schools.
14. Conflict within the family because of drunken fathers and the development of weak family relationship
15. Lack of guardian and shortage of educational material for orphan and vulnerable children.
16. Insecurity of children by street youth.
17. Alcoholism in fathers and young male children is increasing and causing family disturbance and disintegration

**C. Gedam Sefer Community Members solutions for the identified weaknesses**

1. Strengthen the family ties and empower them through income generating schemes.
2. Equip families with parenting skills.
3. Change liquor houses and drug shops into productive centres.  
Establish and strengthen youth centres. **Summary of the Discussions with Children**

**A. Community assets as perceived by children which are helpful for a healthy child development.**

1. Existence of schools within a short distance.
2. Presence of schools clubs such as music, sport, Red Cross, etc.
3. Tutorial class by schools and youth volunteers.
4. Families advise children to refrain or protect themselves from socially undesirable behaviours
5. Availability of some recreational centres such as DSTV to follow current football matches.

**B. Community liabilities as perceived by children considered harmful to their healthy development.**

1. Addiction of family members to smoking, alcohol and gambling.
2. Unfavourable social environment for children such as presence of gambling places and parents spending their time in such places.
3. Poor environmental sanitation within the neighbourhood and lack of proper personal hygiene.
4. Lack of supervision and proper guidance and control by parents.
5. Domestic work burden by some families, irrespective of sex difference of the children compared to their physical and psychological capacity,
6. Some families do not give adequate time for children to study and to do their assignments.
7. Some families do not mentor and supervise the academic performance of children.
8. Parental conflict by some families.
9. Corporal punishment of children by some parents.
10. Inadequate capacity of some families to provide basic needs like food and educational materials for children.
11. Some parents do not allow children to participate in the decision making on family affairs.
12. Most of the parents do not allow children to voice their needs and interests.
13. Some parents accept information from others and without checking the claim from children punish them with unfounded information.
14. Lack of proper emotional support to children.

**C. Assets children pointed out about other children and themselves in Gedam Sefer**

1. Assist parents, the elderly and neighbours.
2. Children supporting one another academically and in problem situations.
3. Emotional support to children/peers who faced different problems.
4. Participation in environmental sanitation.
5. Respecting parents and the elderly

**D. Liabilities children identified about themselves in this community:**

1. Group fighting
  2. Some children disrespect elders and the disabled
  3. Snatching properties of others
  4. Destruction and stealing of school property
  5. Cheating others
  6. Physically abusing younger children
  7. Breaching family and school rules and regulations
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