

Minute 13

Engagement Discussion with Children in Kebele 03/09

Children who attended the previous strength and gaps identification meetings and who did not attend were called for the meeting. Accordingly, 56 children came for the discussion (28 who attended once the meeting with children and/or the community meeting; and 28 new participants).

The discussion started by explaining the points raised by the previous meetings about the community's and children's strengths and gaps. The new participants were given the opportunity to identify the community's and their strengths.

Accordingly, they said that the community and the youth have:



Strengths

- The youth have a motivation to work. As an example youths who were involved in different unhealthy activities are organized in group and some work individually in car washing and parking.
- Youth are establishing association to be productive citizens and are looking for meaning in their vision, but if not assisted they will crumble.
- Group fighting and other criminal activities are decreasing.
- Youth and children respect each other.
- There are youth engaged with productive activities as daily laborers, shoe shine boys, etc. and they are showing us that we should give respect for work.
- Youth who were involved in gambling, chat chewing, etc. have quitted such activities and are giving respect to production activities.
- Youth and children are willing and some are members of scout, Red Cross and other clubs in schools.
- Youth and children are attempting to organize football clubs.
- Youth and children are willing to be trained in different sports.
- There are youths and children who have different talents and are willing to give training for the youth and children in drama and painting if the community could facilitate places for these activities within the community or in school compounds.

Gaps (weakness)

- There are some youths and children involved in gambling, this is unhealthy for us.
- Some of the youth who are involved in car washing and other income generating activities are spending their income uneconomically and sometimes consume a lot of alcohol, chat and smoking, etc.
- Our parents, older brothers and sisters ask us to buy them chat, alcohol, cigarette, etc. This is not good for us since we may take these unhealthy activities as normal and we will be tempted to try it.
- Lack of sport facilities and football field, creates misunderstandings between community members and children. When we, children, try to play in a little open space within the neighborhood or in the road, people are insulting and hitting us, then we are forced to go to gambling places
- Chat selling and chewing should be far from residential and school compounds

- Music and video shows should also be far from both residential and school compounds
- Gambling shops, liquor selling shops should be far from residential quarters
- Different clubs who were active in schools are weakened. Previously, scouts clubs, HIH/AIDS clubs, etc were active, but now they are not active.
- There are many children who are forced to work beyond their age and capacity within our neighborhood.
- There are many children that their parents will not allow them to join their colleagues within the neighborhood.

Solutions

- To start with, children should have a small multipurpose training room for children. It can be within the neighborhood, or class rooms within schools to be used outside school hour (evenings/weekends). “If we have just a small room, then more will develop later, since alphabet starts from a then b. The training could be drama, arts, coaching, etc.”
- Facilitate opportunities for the youth and children who have talents to share their talents to their peers through peer education in arts, sports, etc. These youth with talents could train us if different clubs such as painting, drama, etc. with little expenses.
- Awareness raising efforts on the rights and duties of families and children
- Bring back the role of different clubs in schools and within the neighborhood



Children elected by the children to represent them

After they identified, the strengths, gaps and solutions, the children were asked that who should take the responsibility to solutions for theirs and their community’s problems. Some said that it is government and the adults who should pave the way for their health development. But after they discuss it in detail among themselves, they concluded that it should be addressed by themselves (children), adults and the government. They stressed that they (children) should be the major players to raise their voice for their own issue.

We discussed on how to elect their representatives to the core group, after they agreed that they should take the lead. Accordingly, some proposed to have four representatives while other say eight. At last they agreed to have six representatives, their reasoning was 4 was too little while 8 was too much. They were also gender sensitive and said that there should have equal gender representation. The girls elected their 3 representative and the boys also elected their 3 representatives.

The election process was so heated and took about 30 minutes. Since, the children are from different schools and also from different former kebele’s; but now in one kebele by the new structure, the elected representatives pledged to work for all children for former different kebeles and different schools without bias.

After the election, the children’s representatives raised the issue of having their own separate committee and agreed to discuss it among themselves and elect their chairperson and secretary next week.