

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).