



A Partnership for Improving the Lives of Poor Families in the Gedam Sefer Community in Ethiopia: Opportunities, Challenges and Lessons Learned

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Acknowledgements

This report represents the learning process that occurred through the development of the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership (GSCP). Built on the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Family Based Community Development (FBCD), the Partnership brought university faculty and students from the University of Illinois at Chicago and Addis Ababa University together with people from the Gedam Sefer community. From its humble beginnings in student-led community assessment and action research, the Partnership resulted in a new grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk children and families through strengths-based community development.

We are very thankful to The Oak Foundation for funding this innovative approach to improving the welfare of children through community development. We benefited immeasurably by the support and guidance of Fassil Mariam, Oak Foundation Programme Officer, Child Abuse Programme, East Africa. Development projects designed without preset objectives—but designed rather to respond to “what the community wants”—require an immense level of trust and vision on the part of the funder. The Gedam Sefer Children’s Theatre and Drama Club described in this report shows the power of children to bring about change in themselves, their families, and their community. When given voice, community residents become grounded in their strengths and assets. In this respect, a major outcome of the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership is the value of ABCD with children.

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For further information: http://www.aboutswEEP.org/gedam_sefer/index.html

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Introduction

“We cannot eat a road.” This short but powerful statement was uttered by a woman, who was surprised by the construction of a tarmac road in the middle of her very poor community. Her observation reflects the sentiments of many individuals who became active participants in the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership (GSCP). Through the process of organizing the Partnership, the residents of Gedam Sefer would utilize their strengths and assets to engage in development strategies responsive to their needs. Dr. Alice K. Butterfield repeated the above quote many times during her discussions about Gedam Sefer with individuals and groups both in and outside of Ethiopia. The remark has become a symbolic reference to the principles of the Gedam Sefer initiative, grounded as it is in the idea that community development must begin from the needs, dreams and aspirations of individuals *inside* the community and then gradually involve entities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government.

In January 2007, Dr. Butterfield met with officials from the Geneva headquarters of the Oak Foundation in Ethiopia, and Fassil Mariam, Programme Officer, Child Abuse Programme, East Africa. The purpose of the meeting was to brief officials on Dr. Butterfield's research in Gedam Sefer, and the engagement of students from Addis Ababa University in the Gedam Sefer community through assessments and course assignments. These efforts provided information on community strengths and the main challenges hindering the well-being of children, youth and women. Participants discussed the idea of establishing a community-university partnership in Gedam Sefer that would be based on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). After carefully hearing the presentation, representatives of the Oak Foundation asked the following questions:

- “What was the level of participation of children during previous studies in general, as well as in the community workshop held to discuss the study findings?”
- “Since you come from a prestigious university, how do you deal with the power relationship with the community?”
- “How do you manage community expectations?”
- “How do you treat a problem such as prostitution with the ABCD model?”
- “How do you want to go about this work with the Oak Foundation?”

In response to the above questions, Dr. Butterfield explained that action research projects are designed to handle uneven power relationships between universities and communities. Action research encourages community members to participate actively, to exercise their expertise, and to participate in decision-making. Starting with the ABCD concept of "what the community wants" is a way of involving community residents in a continuous process of conversation that builds upon individual, family, association, and community strengths and assets. This process minimizes the community's dependency on external resources.

Managing community expectations is a problem inherent in all types of community development and social change efforts. For example, just the presence of helping professionals representing universities and their powerful resource of knowledge can unintentionally raise the expectations of poor people living in disadvantaged communities. The strength of ABCD in dealing with this is that the development process is driven from *inside* the community by the interest of participants working in partnership with *outside* institutions. For example, regarding the problem of prostitution, ABCD's focus on exploring individual, group and community assets is useful in identifying skills other than those that engage women in commercial sex. If personal skills are explored and women have the opportunity to use alternative skills for more healthy and productive activities, ABCD will positively affect them and their children.

The Oak Foundation was interested in supporting a process that addressed the well-being of at-risk and vulnerable children. In further discussion with Fassil Mariam, Dr. Butterfield took the lead in writing a proposal submitted to the Oak Foundation. The final proposal for "Asset Based Community Development: A Partnership for Improving the Lives of Poor Families in Gedam Sefer Community in Ethiopia" was submitted to the Oak Foundation by The Love For Children Organization.

The proposal was unique in several ways. First, it did not bring pre-defined projects to the community for their acceptance and participation. Rather, the Partnership would work with residents to:

- understand, document, and organize the community's inherent strengths and capabilities;
- prioritize issues and develop methods of organizing its projects;
- implement these projects and evaluate results using participatory, action research methods; and
- identify implementable activities for long-term sustainable outcomes.

Second, improving child and family outcomes would be interwoven into the Partnership and its intervention strategy in both process and outcomes. The Partnership would show outcomes directly tied to improved social functioning among poor families in Gedam Sefer. Third, ABCD efforts would promote, recognize and honor the contribution of community throughout all phases of the work. It was with this understanding that the Oak Foundation stepped in as a pioneer to support the initiation of ABCD as an alternative model of community development.

This report has eight chapters. Chapter 1 briefly discusses the key components of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Family



Dr. Richard Kordesh provides training on Family Based Community Development

Based Community Development (FBCD), the contributions of action research in engaging the community members and intellectuals from universities. Chapter 2 presents the background of the Gedam Sefer Community University Partnership engagement processes. Chapter 3 describes the challenges of working to form an institutional structure in implementing ABCD and FBCD with community members. It demonstrates that when community members are engaged in exploring their assets, gaps and strengths, how "low hanging fruit" can create trust and confidence both for the insider and outside partners.

Chapter 4 briefly presents the partnership's response to community's felt needs to improve capacity of members' skills. Chapter 5 demonstrates that in an ABCD engagement process, both the inside and outside actors should try every possible alternative to build relationships to address the sensitive concerns of the community. While the engagement process with adult community members within the neighborhood is challenging, the inside and outside actors invited people from all walks of life, including children ages 7 to 14 years. Of all participants, the children came out boldly and addressed issues of concern for all residents and this refocused the attention of community members on the well-being of children. Children and the issues raised by children are their major concerns. Based on their work and the community's and their parents' approval, the children's major requests were addressed as parts of the ABCD "low hanging fruit."



ABCD with children was a powerful force for the welfare of children in Gedam Sefer

Chapter 6 describes the contributions of action research in the development of the partnership for community participants, and university students and professors. Chapter 7 presents the important lessons learned significant for future ABCD practices working in slum areas, with particular reference to developing countries. Chapter 8 concludes by emphasizing the principles of ABCD practice as learned from the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership.

Chapter 1. Key Components of the Gedam Sefer Partnership

The overall purpose of the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership (GSCP) was to improve the lives of children and families in the Gedam Sefer community. To do this, the Partnership utilized a development process and intervention strategies based on the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Family Based Community Development (FBCD). The GSCP was conceived as a mechanism to create an ongoing service and learning network to fulfill the community's aspirations for betterment as well as the university's desire to generate and disseminate useful knowledge through community engagement.

The GSCP promoted, recognized, and honored the contribution of community throughout all its efforts to protect children and improve social functioning among poor families in Gedam Sefer. For example, the use of ABCD and FBCD, the participation of youth, families and individuals with staff and university personnel in action research projects, and the reliance on community members to identify their own projects, were focused on improving the lives of children and families in Gedam Sefer. The dimensions of their lives that were the foci for improvement – education, artistic or cultural expression, small enterprises, the prevention of abuse, health, or others – were determined by the people of the community themselves. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the following key components of the Partnership:

- A process with the community
- The principles of Asset Based Community Development
- The principles of Family Based Community Development
- Action research
- Responding to what the community wants
- Low hanging fruit
- Establishing the organizational structure

A Process with the Community

The GSCP leaders were engaged in a process and structure that encouraged individuals and families in Gedam Sefer to work as partners with social work faculty and graduate students from the University of Illinois at Chicago and Addis Ababa University. The overall planning process and the efforts of the Partnership originated from the interests of the community's residents, and utilized their assets and skills as central to community development.

The process of establishing the GSCP followed a set of principles drawn from two compatible frameworks for community development: 1) Asset-Based Community Development¹ and 2)

¹ John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, 1993. *Building Communities from the Inside-Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications

Family-Based Community Development.² The organizing and development process was not based on pre-determined outcomes. Staff, faculty, and graduate students facilitated meetings and training sessions that imparted knowledge about community development to local residents, including children, youth, parents and individual adults. The focus of these meetings was on eliciting ideas about major issues, and the actions that members of the community would like to take to resolve these issues by building on their assets and strengths. Community dialogues imparted the principles and concepts from ABCD and FBCD even as participants used these concepts to identify their assets and set priorities for projects.

The Principles of Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is based on a belief that formal systems of service tend to stifle community development by emphasizing a view of people as deficient, dependent, and primarily beset by problems. This type of orientation views people as the "targets" of intervention. From the ABCD perspective, this deficits-based approach has a disabling effect on individuals, rendering them less able to assert and utilize the assets that they already possess. John McKnight and John Kretzmann had argued against the deficits orientation for a number of years, and ABCD crystallized their research into a process of community development. They define ABCD as a set of principles to guide community development that focuses on the gifts of individuals, the strengths of local associations, and the assets of communities "from the inside out."

ABCD follows several principles:

- “This community development strategy starts with what is present in the community: the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area – not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs.”
- “The development strategy concentrates first of all upon the agenda building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations and local institutions.”
- “If a community development process is to be asset-based and internally focused, then it will be in very important ways relationship driven.”³

Economically devastated communities can use either of two different paths to respond to their problems. One path focuses on the community’s needs, deficiencies and problems. The other path begins with a clear commitment to discover the community’s capacities and assets. ABCD is an asset-based approach that emphasizes an “inside-out” process of community development. This means that community development begins with self-directed reflection and action by individuals empowered by recognition of their assets. ABCD draws attention to social assets: “the gifts and talents of individuals, and the social relationships that fuel local associations and

² Richard S. Kordesh, 2006. *Restoring Power to Parents and Places: The Case for Family-Based Community Development*, New York: iUniverse.

³ Kretzmann and McKnight, p. 9

informal networks.”⁴ Whereas ABCD emphasizes individuals and associations in the locality, the focus is on "unrealized" resources such as personal skills and attributes, relationships and social capital as key assets in the task of building sustainable development from the bottom up.

ABCD is a counteracting response to the need-based approach of development often promoted by universities and other development actors to address the problems of impoverished communities. ABCD outlines five steps in its approach to community development:

- **Mapping Assets:** Mapping completely the capacities and assets of individuals, citizens' associations and local institutions.
- **Building Relationships:** Building relationships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem solving within the community.
- **Mobilizing Assets:** Mobilizing the community's assets fully for economic development and information sharing purposes.
- **Convening the Community:** Convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a community vision and plan.
- **Leveraging Outside Resources:** Leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community to support asset-based, locally defined development.⁵

In Ethiopia, the ABCD model as an organized development approach is just beginning. Researchers have reported the emerging use of the concept of ABCD in the African context including in Ethiopia.⁶

The Principles of Family Based Community Development

Family Based Community Development (FBCD) takes a view similar to ABCD's emphasis on assets rather than needs, but focuses on families – parents and children's caregivers in particular – in addition to individuals. FBCD stresses the mutual engagement between families and community institutions toward the restoration of producer or co-producer roles for families. FBCD holds that families are often crowded out of roles that would enable them to produce the goods, services, and changes in their lives that would benefit themselves and their communities. Rather, they are limited to the roles of consumers or clients in their relationships with formal service providers, schools, and NGOs. By necessity, the FBCD process is driven in part by families or individuals participating as family members. However, a school, cooperative, or other community institution that offers to engage and support productive roles for families in education, enterprise activity, health prevention, planning, or other activities can also trigger FBCD initially. Therefore, it is not as purely a bottom-up process as ABCD.

⁴ Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (2002). From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development (p. 3). Occasional Paper Series, No. 4. Coady International Institute, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada. Retrieved January 22, 2011 from http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/files/From_Clients_to_Citizens.doc

⁵ Social design. Retrieved June 18, 2010 from <http://www.socialdesign.org/assets/development.html>

⁶ Bergdall, T. (2003). Reflections on the catalytic role of an outsider in “asset based community development” (ABCD). Retrieved January 22, 2011, from <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/docs/ABCD-outside-catalyst.pdf>

FBCD identifies core goals that focus on respecting and supporting families as producers and co-producers. These goals are:

- To build thick, productive roles for mothers, fathers, and other immediate caregivers of children in the family. A “thick” role is one that engages many of the parent’s capacities in the care of a child. Such capacities might include teaching moral values, religious tradition, modeling good hygiene practices, counseling and providing disciplines on behavioral matters. It also means monitoring who a child is spending time with and getting to know a child’s friends. A thick role requires time and commitment. A thin role is one in which there are few points of connection between a child and a parent.
- To create diverse and productive family institutions. Such institutions can include home-based or home-linked enterprises, agriculture or gardening cooperatives, home-based child or elder care, or safe homes where children can go when they feel threatened.
- To establish communications networks among families as well as between families and community institutions. Such networks can be based on the Internet or face-to-face gatherings. They allow for sharing of knowledge and skills about enterprise activity, educational practices, safety, food production and distribution, informal and formal health care, and other practices.
- To build host settings or co-producing partnerships for families in schools, community centers, shopping centers, markets, and faith-based institutions. Such settings might include family resource centers, micro enterprise incubators in malls or spaces in markets set aside for family businesses, and classes or prayer groups in which parents lead or teach social skills or religious lessons in collaboration with clergy of various denominations.
- To engage families and community institutions together in place-based community planning. Families can participate with community development organizations and planners in design dialogues that lead to visions and strategies to make villages or neighborhoods supportive of productive family enterprises and practices, including those based in or linked to their homes.
- To construct public policies that can protect and support productive family roles and institutions in community development. For example, policies can support capacity building and micro lending for family enterprises. They can require that some school funds be set aside for family resource centers in schools, that lands in cities be set aside for small-scale agriculture projects managed by families, and that housing funds be set aside to build live/work spaces into some homes.⁷

Action Research

Action research produces knowledge jointly useful for community and scholarly purposes. This form of research is ideally suited for the community learning networks that form when

⁷ Kordesh, pp. 27-29

community partnerships are organized effectively. In this mode of investigation, all participants are researchers and all are students.

Responding to What the Community Wants

In implementing the principles of ABCD, it is important to connect community members who "care enough to act"⁸ about issues in their communities. The ABCD process with the community includes the identification of strengths, gaps and possible solutions to community problems by giving priority to the strengths and assets of individuals, associations, institutions, and communities to solve their problems from within the community. This process gives both "inside" and "outside" actors the ability to identify strong community members as leaders and develop the means to act together on the community's priorities. "Each community development group has to find its own unique path to success. There is no model or recipe..." for dealing with gaps and finding solutions.⁹ In order for the ABCD process to succeed, it takes time, energy and commitment.

When the community identifies what it wants to accomplish, then it is important to try to accomplish it. According to Mike Green, "The most important asset in any community is people's willingness to act on what they care about. Care brings people together for common purpose. Care is a song that flows through every community and those who want to develop stronger communities."¹⁰ If people are listened to and heard properly, then they will be ready to work together to accomplish what they want to accomplish. The GSCP passed through this process and started acting on the community's interest to obtain its "low hanging fruit."

"Low Hanging Fruit"

At the outset, the planners of the GSCP project distinguished between short-term, modest projects that could be acted on quickly and longer-term projects that would take patient planning, organization, resource development, and consensus building with NGOs and local government. Short-term projects were referred to as "low hanging fruit" -- relatively easy to accomplish projects that could build immediately on the identification of assets and the priorities of community participants.

These low hanging fruit were to be supported with modest allocations from a fund set aside for this purpose in the Oak Foundation grant. Such projects might involve purchases of equipment for associations, tools or supplies for activities that youth might want to carry out, or the purchase of specialized training or group development experiences to further capacity building. Once the low hanging fruit were "picked," participants' beliefs in the positive benefits of community development would be reinforced, morale would be raised, and larger, more complex projects, again with individuals and families in productive roles, could be designed and undertaken. However, due to the adherence to the principles of ABCD and FBCD, the specific nature of such projects was not known at the outset.

⁸ Green, M. (2006). *When people care enough to act: ABCD in action*. (Second Edition). Toronto, Canada: Inclusion Press.

⁹ Green, p. 17.

¹⁰ Green, p. 55.

The Importance of a Container of Books

In the GSCP Project, "low hanging fruit" were short-term projects that resulted from the process of ABCD and FBCD discussions with community members. A series of discussions conducted with children and community members identified three immediate projects. These were presented to parents and school administrators: books for public schools and libraries, a children's summer program, and training for children in basic drama and theatre skills. In consultation with the GSCP leaders, all were implemented. The summer program and the drama and theatre training for children are discussed in Chapter 5. The importance of a container of books is discussed here as the GSCP's first "low-hanging fruit" project.



School librarians sorting and registering books

Prior to the children's suggestion, Dr. Butterfield was networking with Books For Africa to raise funds for the shipment of a container of books for organizations and schools in Ethiopia. In response to the children's request, the GSCP became one of the beneficiaries. Accordingly, 5,000 of the 40,000 books shipped to Ethiopia were distributed in the Gedam Sefer community to eight public schools and two public libraries. Two schools that had no libraries opened libraries for their students. Two schools that had closed their small libraries because of a shortage of books re-opened them. Four functional libraries received additional books and improved their services.

A book in the hands of students and teachers is an important contribution in and of itself. However, in relation to ABCD and the beginning work of the GSCP, the distribution of books was more important in two ways. First, the books represented "what the community wants." The children raised the issue of the shortage of books in their schools during their community mapping assessment. As they presented their findings to the community members, parents, and school principals, the issue emerged as a primary "low-hanging fruit" project based on what the community wanted.



Books in the hands of Gedam Sefer children

All the school principals who participated in the discussion unanimously agreed with the results of the children's mapping. Since neither the schools nor the Partnership members had the capacity to purchase books, outside resources to support what the community wanted was necessary. The books brought forth the community's willingness to act together. When the books arrived in Addis Ababa, the GSCP community leaders, adults as well

as children, volunteered to unload and sort 146 boxes of books. Community members, the school principals and the local government officials discussed and identified a place from which to distribute the books to school libraries and public libraries. Based on their discussions, the *Kebele*¹¹ administration and the school principals assigned their librarians to participate in sorting and distributing the books. In 2008, the 5,000 books built a strong relationship between the GSCP leaders, community members in the neighborhood, school administrators, and the *Kebele* administration. The books also moved school principals to offer space for the children's Summer Learning Program in 2009.

Establishing the Organizational Structure

The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership did not begin with a fully developed organizational structure. In the proposal to the Oak Foundation, a few key roles such as trainers, researchers, a Project Coordinator, and Community Outreach Workers were identified. However, working out the terms developing and implementing the Partnership took place through dialogue between community residents, university trainers, and project staff. The initial team was composed of Mulu Yeneabat, MSW as the GSCP Project Coordinator, Betemichael Markos and Mawura Buchi as community workers, Dr. Alice Butterfield and Dr. Richard Kordesh from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), students from Addis Ababa University (AAU), and volunteers from local government offices.

One of the first tasks was to develop a permanent organizational structure for the Partnership. This was not an easy task. The original idea was that The Love For Children Organization would get the funds and give a subcontract to UIC, and UIC would work with AAU under the Memorandum of Agreement that was signed between the two universities. The project proposal submitted to the Oak Foundation by The Love for Children Organization. Since UIC and AAU already had a Memorandum of Agreement to collaborate in teaching and research, the GSCP was conceptualized as part of this agreement. Prior to proposal writing, the AAU School of Social Work consulted and commented on the project proposal. However, as soon as the grant was secured, the project quickly ran into difficulties. The major difficulties were:

- Donor money from outside of Ethiopia could not be transferred out of the country by an NGO, so this made it impossible to transfer funds from The Love For Children Organization to UIC;
- Oak Foundation could not directly approve funds for AAU as a government institution; and
- AAU was not ready to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with The Love For Children Organization and not ready to accommodate the GSCP as one of its activities.

The above situations resulted in the two professors, Dr. Alice Butterfield and Dr. Richard Kordesh from UIC, working as consultants. Even though the AAU School of Social Work was not ready to work formally with the GSCP, individual students and teaching staff engaged and

¹¹ *Kebele* is the smallest Ethiopian governmental administrative unit

contributed to the GSCP. For example, PhD students received financial support to attend the International Social Work conference in South Africa in 2009, and an international conference in Italy in 2010. The Partnership also supported the action research and dissertation research of social work PhD students in the Gedam Sefer community, and as a result, community members gained skills in participatory action research. In the absence of the AAU School of Social Work taking a leading institutional role in facilitating the GSCP, The Love For Children Organization played a major role as the legal auspices of the GSCP by administering the funds and recruiting the project coordinator and community workers.

Over the first two years of the GSCP, many attempts were made to formalize the relationship between the GSCP and Addis Ababa University. However, when community members saw that a formal partnership agreement with AAU was impossible, they went forward and created a formal working group by electing different committees and assigning different tasks to each group. The result was that the GSCP strengthened its grassroots organizational capacity as residents from the Gedam Sefer community improved their skills. The eventual outcome was that GSCP members decided to form a legally registered community association as the organizational auspices of the GSCP. They drafted bylaws and a project proposal, worked hard and waited for more than a year to get legal status for the new association. The detailed process will be discussed later.



GSCP members conducting a meeting

Chapter 2. The Gedam Sefer Community-University Partnership

A community-university partnership is unique in that it not only brings together very different kinds of people – researchers, government officials, adult residents, children and youth – but also because it must integrate the perspectives of representative groups and bring them together according to the principles of ABCD. In addition, it must do so in a transparent way. The action research methods alluded to above complement well the ABCD principle of listening to and respecting the community’s voice. Action research and engagement with the Gedam Sefer community laid the beginning foundation for the GSCP.

The Process of Engagement with the Gedam Sefer Community

There were two distinct phases or stages of engagement. Phase 1 was the beginning of engagement with the Gedam Sefer community by university faculty and students. The key elements of Phase 1 were community assessments, research, and field placements. Phase 2 consisted of bringing the findings of research back to the community in meetings and dialogue with local government leaders and community members, and conducting preliminary trainings on ABCD and FBCD.

One of the challenges in carrying out research aimed at assessing a community’s assets, problems, and general social and economic characteristics is that the research must be executed in a way that it both satisfies the standards of scholarly rigor and builds trust with community stakeholders from the grassroots level up to the local government level. Thus, although the two phases – assessment and engagement – were distinct, they each required adherence to the standards of scholarship and the principles of ABCD. Balancing these two principles successfully, providing a sound foundation of trust and reliable data on which to build.

Phase 1: Community Assessment and Other Studies

Phase 1 began in September 2004 when a group of Masters of Social Work (MSW) students from AAU carried out a community assessment project for the course Integrated Social Work Methods I. The group assessed the general socio-demographic characteristics, existing resources (physical, institutional and human), strengths and gaps of the Gedam Sefer community. The assessment found that the community had some interesting characteristics. It was located at the center of Addis Ababa, and adjacent to the historical St. George Church established in 1886 by the popular King of Ethiopia, Emperor Menelik II. Gedam Sefer was a community subject to renovation through the replacement of shanty houses by condominium apartments by the city government. As is typical of many poor neighborhoods in Addis Ababa, there were high rates of unemployment, health issues, homelessness, and other social problems.

The findings from the community assessment showed the high prevalence of female-headed households, with 794 female-headed households living in 2,200 housing units managed by the local *Kebele*. Until the assessment revealed the high number of female-headed households, the *Kebele* officials were not aware of the fact. The MSW students compiled the data and presented it. Some officials wanted to know more about these households, particularly about their

economic activities and social relationships, and were interested in collaborating to explore the situation of female-headed households in Gedam Sefer community.

In the summer of 2005, Dr. Butterfield and MSW students Wassie Kebede and Andom Gessesse interviewed a random sample of women-headed families living in public housing administered by the *Kebele*. The purpose of the study was to assess and inventory the women's individual skills, community skills, and business skills, including what they were willing to teach others and what new skills they wanted to learn.¹² *Kebele* officials gave their official consent for the study, provided access to households, and recruited data collection assistants. The results of the study were brought back to the community for dialogue and discussion. The aim was to use the study's findings to inform a development agenda that would involve community members, local government, and university faculty.

The engagement of *Kebele* officials, community members, and university faculty in a discussion of future partnership initiatives had both prospects and constraints. On the one hand, officials were interested and enthusiastic to welcome academics to work with them. On the other hand, the *Kebele* administration had no mandate from city government administration to establish such a partnership. Nonetheless, the goodwill of the officials helped continue the discussion of ABCD and made it possible to plan for ongoing engagement. The positive communication and goodwill of both community members and government officials inspired some MSW students to carry out a second community assessment on the life of beggars in the community. Others conducted thesis research, or completed field placements in government programs in Gedam Sefer. The engagement activities of MSW students from the School of Social Work at AAU are summarized as follows:

- Community Assessment – 2004 – Housing and Slum Upgrading
- Community Assessment – 2006 – Life of the Beggars Community
- Research project in Gedam Sefer Community, Summer 2005
- Thesis research – 2006, 2008
- Field placements, 2008, 2009, 2010
- Dissertation research – 2008-2009

In summary, the ABCD skill inventory of 100 female-headed households in Gedam Sefer contributed to the engagement process in two important ways. First, organizing the research required communication with local government. These discussions highlighted the idea of the engaged university,¹³ and the value of community-university partnerships. Second, the study directly introduced the principles of ABCD to 100 members of the community.

¹² Butterfield, A.K., Kebede, W., & Gessesse, A. (2009). Research as a catalyst for asset-based community development: Assessing the skills of poor women in Ethiopia. *Social Development Issues*, 31(2), 1-14.

¹³ Boyer, E. L. 1990. *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Phase 2: Dialogue and Training with the Community

A dialogue and discussion on the skills inventory was conducted in November 2006. This was a unique experience for the *Kebele* officials and community members invited to the workshop. Some participants reported that, heretofore, no one who had conducted studies in the community had organized a dialogue on their study outcomes. After listening to the long list of skills of 100 women, some felt that it is useless to mention skills such as caring for children and the elderly, which were viewed as skills given by God to every woman. Begging was seen as a special skill that only a few individuals have. There was an argument about whether begging was a skill or just one way of earning income. Others responded that they had never recognized their skills as important in contributing to household improvement and community development. Still others commented on the study methods and pointed out gaps that the study did not address.

At the end of the meeting, participants spontaneously proposed to elect a Core Group of 29 members to guide the work of the emerging community-university partnership. The Core Group would represent the Gedam Sefer community and work for the official establishment of a partnership between the Gedam Sefer community and, as hoped for at this stage, the social work programs at UIC and AAU.

To familiarize the Core Group with the concepts of ABCD and FBCD, a workshop was organized on March 30, 2007 with Drs. Butterfield and Kordesh from UIC, and doctoral students from AAU.¹⁴ This workshop provided information about community-university partnerships in the USA, and introduced FBCD in relation to housing as a productive family asset. At the end of the workshop, the Core Group decided to elect a Technical Committee of 11 persons, which included some officials from *Kebele* 03/09.



GSCP's Technical Committee with Elias Debebe, MSW student (far right)

Between the time of the first community workshop held in November 2007 and the March 2008 workshop, additional meetings were held with *Kebele* officials and the Core Group to make sure they understood the concepts of ABCD and community-university partnerships. These meetings are summarized below.

1. A meeting on November 30, 2007 included six top *Kebele* officials, Dr. Butterfield, Wassie Kebede, and Mulu Yeneabat, MSW, the Project Coordinator of the GSCP. The main issues of discussion were the importance of community-university partnerships, and short-term and long-term plans. At this meeting, *Kebele* officials understood the mutual benefits of partnerships that utilize the strengths of communities and universities. Further understanding came in distinguishing between the projects of NGOs and those intended by community-university collaboration. The

¹⁴ The PhD Program in Social Work and Social Development at Addis Ababa University started in 2006. Several MSW students were admitted to doctoral studies, and continued to engage with the Gedam Sefer community.

Kebele officials expressed their willingness to work to facilitate such a partnership processes.

2. A joint meeting on December 11, 2007 included 16 participants (eight community members, five PhD students, the two UIC faculty, and the Project Coordinator). This meeting briefed participants about progress in establishing the GSCP. It also focused on future planning for participatory action research to strengthen community collaboration and continue moving forward in the use of ABCD in Gedam Sefer. Community members felt strongly that the commitment and active participation of the *Kebele* administration, local associations such as *iddirs*,¹⁵ youth associations/clubs, and school representatives were vital to the establishment of an official partnership.
3. On December 27, 2007, 35 individuals (31 community members and 4 graduate students from the School of Social Work) participated. At this discussion, participants committed to inviting more community members to be part of future meetings. Doctoral students asked community members to identify their areas of interest so that students could engage with the community to conduct participatory action research. Some preliminary concerns of community members included issues related to children, youth, families and women.
4. On January 11, 2008, a joint meeting of children, youth, adults and doctoral students was held in the compound of Bethlehem School. Fifty-six individuals (26 children, 12 youth and 12 adults) participated. The main agenda of the meeting was identifying the strengths and problems of the Gedam Sefer Community as suggested for discussion during the meeting held on December 27, 2007.

In the initial months of establishing the GSCP, children were not involved directly in the dialogue and training sessions. However, after adults began the ABCD planning process, the children asked to participate in the adult meetings, and to have their own ABCD process for children. In order to understand community issues from the children's point of view, several sessions of ABCD for Children were held. The children raised many serious issues that they felt required attention by their families, concerned community members, and other stakeholders. The six children in the photo presented finding from ABCD for Children to community members. Four of the children were elected to participate as observers in the adult committee meetings, and opportunity was given for them to comment.



Young leaders of the ABCD planning process with children in Gedam Sefer

¹⁵ *Iddirs* are strong traditional associations that provide mutual support for members in times of crisis and function as a form of insurance in times of severe illness and death.

Chapter 3. The Institutional Structure of the Partnership

Although community participants enthusiastically embraced the “inside-out” philosophy of ABCD, balancing the interest of residents with the interests of associations and formal organizations remained an ongoing concern. In fact, in any community it is not always clear whose perspective a seeming member of the community might be representing. For example, some community residents might also be members of a local political party; others might also be elders in a church, while still others may also work for a local hotel or government agency. This mix of interests is natural, and in the end, can help a process that begins on the inside move more seamlessly to the outside, engaging the NGOs, universities, or government entities whose support is necessary. The GSCP participants – university and community – learned about these realities and addressed them as they occurred. This chapter describes the challenges of working without a formal structure as the Partnership attempted to form an institutional structure to implement ABCD and FBCD with community members. It demonstrates that when community members are engaged in exploring their assets, gaps and strengths, low hanging fruit can create trust and confidence—for both the insider and outsider partners.

Difficulties in Working from the Grassroots Up and Inside Out

As noted, the GSCP started with several efforts on the part of students and professors to engage with the local *Kebele* administration and members of the Gedam Sefer community. From the beginning, Partnership efforts were constrained by the frequent turnover of *Kebele* officials. As noted in Chapter 2, many meetings were held to reconnect with officials who remained in office, and build relationships with new appointees and elected officials.

By the time that grant funds from the Oak Foundation were received and the GSCP officially started, problems arose as to the “true” nature of the Partnership. As indicated in Chapter 1, the GSCP was built on the principles of ABCD, meaning that actors outside of the community (university professors and students) did not come to the community with a pre-set agenda. In the beginning, there was no legal entity representing the GSCP. Nor was the Love for Children Organization functioning in the traditional fashion as an NGO with a predetermined project to implement in the community. There was also no official relationship or signed agreement with the local *kebele* administration. In sum, no legal entity “owned” the GSCP and its process of engagement. With no major institution visibly taking the lead, it was difficult for community members and government officials to understand the true nature of the collaborative partnership. This ambiguity about who is in charge is not unusual at the onset of a bottom-up community development project.

In the beginning, various individuals and groups believed that the inside and outside actors had hidden religious or political or economic agendas. Some suspected that the GSCP must be one of the following types of organizations:

- A protestant religious organization: Historically, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been the major denomination of Christianity in Ethiopia. More recently, evangelical protestant groups are working in the country and converting followers to the protestant

faith. Consequently, the collaborative and process-oriented nature of GSCP activities caused some to fear that the Partnership was a protestant group in disguise.

- A political party: In the months preceding the May 2005 national elections in Ethiopia, many new political parties formed. Since the ideas of ABCD and FBCD were new and different from need-based approaches to community improvement, some believed that the GSCP was a new political party. Additionally, the frequent meetings that brought groups of people together for discussion and dialogue were suspicious. Some local administrators, institutional leaders, and ruling party members saw Partnership members and leaders as an unknown threat.
- A nongovernmental organization (NGO): In terms of social services and community development, Ethiopian NGOs are a major recipient of donor funds from outside the country that are given for development activities in poor communities. These funds are project driven. The local NGO submits a grant proposal to the funding agency. When funds are obtained, the NGO project is implemented in partnership with the local community. Typically, NGOs offer a per diem for community members to participate. In contrast, the GSCP did not have a specific project to implement. Moreover, in adhering to the ABCD principles, no per diem was given to community members for participating in the planning process to identify community assets and strengths and to use these to solve problems "from the inside out." In this context, some thought that the Partnership was using the Gedam Sefer name and misusing funds coming from abroad, which should have been used to pay per diems to community members.



Mulu Yeneabat, MSW, builds confidence and trust in meetings with GSCP members

Of all these, the assumption that the GSCP was a typical NGO type of project was the most difficult. Some community participants viewed the engagement process as the work of external partners coming with a project idea and money to invest. When they realized that this was not so, they retreated from the process, concluding that the GSCP offered little possibility for financial gain, and was, therefore, a waste of time. Nonetheless, with patience and tolerance both the insider and outsider actors built confidence and trust by engaging different community groups (children, association members, and traditional leaders and elders). The children's Summer Learning Program, the distribution of books to different schools within

the neighborhood and public libraries, and the children's theatre and drama training eventually changed the attitude of community members and the local *Kebele* administration.

Working Without a Legal Structure

In the pre-grant phases of assessment and engagement, the absence of a legal structure for the Partnership was not a problem. The *Kebele* administration that was in charge in 2005 and 2006 was willing to give its office space for meetings as a contribution to the community. Officials

were happy to support the groups. They facilitated community meetings and officially communicated with the School of Social Work at AAU. However, when the funded GSCP project started in November 2007, the new *Kebele* administration decided not to continue its relationship with the GSCP because the Partnership did not have a legal status. Due to the frequent turnover of officials in the *Kebele*, the relationship between the GSCP and the *Kebele* administration grew weaker over time. Eventually, the public schools that provided space for meetings and children's programs in 2007 and 2008 would not allow the GSCP to use school compounds in 2009 and 2010.

The lack of a legal structure also jeopardized the GSCP when the School of Social Work at AAU, as an institution, retreated from signing a legal partnership document with the community. Originally, the School had been interested in using the project as a field site for internships in community practice and as a place for action research. When grant funds were received, the School wanted to sign an agreement with another institution, such as the *Kebele* administration or The Love For Children Organization (LCO), to secure funds directly for their participation in the Partnership. However, neither the *Kebele* nor LCO had the authority to sign an agreement with the School on behalf of the community or make decisions for the community. LCO was also directly responsible for administering the grant from the Oak Foundation on behalf of the community, and thus, there was no need to complicate the partnership by moving funds through Addis Ababa University. In fact, doing so would have created more of a top-down development model, and such a move would have jeopardized the GSCP's commitment to grassroots development.

The problem of establishing an official relationship between community members and AAU also had negative effects on securing office space for the GSCP. In August 2008, Mulu Yeneabat, GSCP Project Coordinator, Dr. Butterfield, and Wassie Kebede, a doctoral student at the School of Social Work, met with representatives from the School of Journalism at AAU. The Dean was interested in joining the Partnership, and agreed to provide office space for the GSCP in the School of Journalism, which was located just adjacent to Gedam Sefer community. The Dean requested that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) be signed between the School of Journalism and the School of Social Work. This plan failed, however, because it was not possible to sign an MoU between two units in the same university.

Consequently, for most of the next three years, the GSCP remained an informal organization with tacit agreement (and sometimes disagreement) with the local *Kebele* administration. The Love For Children Organization authorized funds for renting an office, purchasing supplies, and paying for research, training, and other activities carried out in Gedam Sefer on behalf of the GSCP. The Project Coordinator and Community Outreach Workers continued to be employed by LCO. Dr. Butterfield, Dr. Kordesh and doctoral students from AAU continued to work as consultants to the GSCP. LCO supported action research by doctoral students in Gedam Sefer, and allocated grant funds for them to present their papers at international conferences.

Ultimately, the inability of the Partnership to forge an official relationship between the universities and the community empowered the community leaders to take action and establish a new organization for the work in Gedam Sefer. When community members realized they were left without a formal relationship, they decided to form their own nonprofit organization to work

for the livelihood of their members and the well-being of children. The community members decided at this time to delete the word "university" in the name of their new organization, thus calling it simply "The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership (GSCP)." To realize their dream, the community members formed different committees, including a Bylaws Subcommittee, Children's Subcommittee, and a Family Subcommittee.

The Core Group and Coordinating Committee for the GSCP

The Core Group was established in 2005 at the end of the first community workshop. It was organized to discuss the outcomes of the skill inventory study conducted by Dr. Butterfield and two graduate students. The main purpose of the Core Group was to serve as the main reference group for future collaboration between the Gedam Sefer community and higher education institutions. The Core Group consisted of 51 volunteers including women, children, youth, elders, *iddir* leaders of community organizations, representatives of local NGOs, members of the police department, and the *Kebele* officials. In practice, however, the Core Group did not do much in terms of mobilizing the community.



Iddir leaders played an important role as community leaders of the GSCP

At the second community workshop that was organized to introduce ABCD and FBCD approaches, a Coordinating Committee was established. A Management Committee that handled the day-to-day activities of the GSCP consisted of members of the Coordinating Committee. During the second and third years of the Partnership, the Coordinating Committee took responsibility for running the GSCP, including planning, following up with community and child trainees, working to secure the accreditation of the GSCP by government, overseeing staff, and dealing with the two universities as partners in promoting ABCD and FBCD.

The members of the Children's Subcommittee and Family Subcommittee designed proposals, submitted them to the community leaders, and distributed them to the GSCP's General Assembly. The General Assembly discussed these two-year plans and project proposals in several meetings, and all members approved them. In general, these plans focused on developing the GSCP's capacity to plan and organize a process for its community-driven development projects. Community members were aided in developing these plans by the training they received on ABCD and FBCD. The priority areas included:

- Mobilizing the community and other collaborators to establish a youth center and library;
- Strengthening the children's participation with more educational discussions and including more children under the age 14;
- Facilitating educational discussions and training forums, including parent-child communication and parenting skills;

- Incorporating new members and strengthening the Partnership.

The Bylaws Subcommittee contacted different organizations about their experience in writing bylaws, and thoroughly discussed a draft of the new bylaws with community leaders. The final draft was distributed a week before a General Assembly meeting of all 50 members. The General Assembly discussed and commented on all the issues related to the bylaws and the project proposals. The Bylaws Subcommittee responded to all concerns of the community members, accepted their comments, and signed the bylaws and project proposals. Five members were delegated to follow up with relevant government institutions to secure the necessary permits. These documents were presented to the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Justice, and were later resubmitted with minor adjustments. In January 2009, the Federal Ministry of Justice reported all the submitted documents were accepted. The requested registration fee was paid but, unexpectedly, the government passed new legislation regulating non-governmental organizations and charities. This legislation delayed the permit for over a year. Finally, in April 2010 the Federal Government of Ethiopia officially recognized the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership as a legal association.



GSCP Bylaws Committee holds dialogue session with community members

Conclusion

Capacity building from the inside-out means building the skills and knowledge of community participants so that they can design and run their own projects, and build their own organizations and institutions. Nevertheless, in any setting, the limits and possibilities for those efforts, even when led from the inside by residents, still depends to a degree on the scope and influence that will be allowed by government bodies. This is true not only in Addis Ababa or in Ethiopia, but anywhere. The efforts to provide training to leaders and associations will be described next to illustrate this inside-out dynamic.

Chapter 4. Training Adults: Strengthening Community Capacity

As noted in Chapter 3, the difficulty of working from the inside out was magnified by the long delay in obtaining legal status for the community's new association called the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership (GSCP). During this waiting period for legal status, it was important to continue working to sustain the engagement process and capacity building efforts with the community. This chapter outlines the training efforts of the GSCP for adult leaders in the community. Two major efforts included technical assistance, ABCD and FBCD training for dry waste and car washers associations, and a Certificate in Urban Community Development.

Business Planning with Garbage Collectors and Car Washers Associations

Work on business planning started with a leadership committee representing groups and associations in *Kebele* 03/09 in the community. Four garbage collectors associations and the two car washers associations sent their representatives to the business planning meetings. These included two representatives of car washers associations, two from dry waste garbage collectors associations, and three representing children. *Iddirs* elected three representatives, and two people represented the elderly and other community members. During regular bi-monthly committee meetings, they discussed ways to improve the well-being of garbage collectors, car washers and children. These discussions included the committee leaders together with the Project Coordinator, the Community Worker, and MSW field placement students. The subjects covered included how to improve business and customer handling, and how to create smooth working relationships among themselves, other associations, and community members. These constructive opportunities led to deeper and more viable understandings of the concepts of ABCD and FBCD. As a result, the participants developed more trust and confidence in their capabilities and assets.

Garbage Collectors Associations

Garbage collectors associations are a new phenomenon in Addis Ababa and generally in the country. Observing the problem of dry waste and the gaps in dry waste collection services, some people began to collect garbage in Bole Sub-city by charging householders a small fee for picking up their garbage. Learning from these entrepreneurs, the city administration encouraged private firms and groups of individuals to work either as a private firm or as an association to improve dry waste disposal and lessen associated health issues. The city administration gives licenses to private firms and legal status for garbage collection associations formed by community members. It also conducts training on waste management and disposal in collaboration with international organizations such as the International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, and Christian Children's Fund, and with local organizations such as the Ministry of Health and the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Bureau and Offices in collaboration with different local nongovernmental organizations.

In the Gedam Sefer community of *Kebele* 03/09, there was one private garbage collection firm working in the neighborhood. There were also four garbage collectors associations with a total of 67 members, 48 of whom were female. Before starting their garbage collectors association, 14

out of 17 members of one association were homeless, so they named their association Godanaw, which means literally “the street.” All members of Godanaw had attended elementary and high school education, so all could read and write. Though previously homeless and living on the street, they now have families and are renting private houses within the neighborhood. They are able to help themselves, support their children and send them to school. Godanaw members also have reconnected with their families and relatives in nearby neighborhoods and in outlying areas. Most of the members of the remaining three associations were housewives or female-headed householders. The majority were illiterate without any formal education, with a few who had completed elementary school. The income of members of these garbage collectors association was less than one dollar per day, making their families among the poorest of the poor. In order to make sure the neighborhood is clean, the *Kebele* administration supervises the activities of garbage collector associations.



Women engaged in garbage collection and disposal

In the process of organizing the Partnership, the garbage collector associations were invited to a discussion of ABCD and its significance in forming a community partnership. All were convinced of its potential value, and each association delegated two representatives. These representatives agreed to nominate Godanaw for further training because it had better management and leadership capacity, members with higher-level literacy skills, and more customers and outreach services. After several meetings on FBCD, Dr. Kordesh conducted a one-day training on business plans for all the garbage collector representatives, and two additional training days with the Godanaw members.

The business plan developed by the Godanaw Garbage Collectors Association included cleaning their customer's front yards every fortnight, and giving free garbage removal and front yard cleaning to elderly and bed-ridden patients within the neighborhood. Their business plan outlined the organization's development and showed how the association benefits its members. Their goal was to improve their member's income and construct their own cooperative home. They envisioned improving their working skills, expanding their working territory, and increasing the number of customers. In 2007, they had 310 customers, but expanded their business to 501 customers in 2009, with a plan to increase their customer base to 800 households by 2010. Godanaw also planned to increase production and services through composting and establishing seedlings sites and gardens.

The Partnership leaders and the Project Coordinator conducted additional discussions, finalized Godanaw's business plan in Amharic, and translated it into English. The business plan emphasized their assets, needs, and possible solutions. Godanaw members agreed to publish their short personal biographies in a booklet, but this is still pending. However, based on their business plan, a proposal was prepared for purchasing garbage collection carts, gloves and

coveralls for the members of all four garbage collectors associations. Twelve big carts with lids, 12 small carts and coveralls were purchased with GSCP funds by Love For Children Organization, and distributed to members of the associations.

The Godanaw business plan accommodated short-term and long-term plans and an organizational vision, but when the "low hanging fruit" of carts, gloves, and gowns were purchased, some members were dissatisfied. They immediately wanted to prioritize their long-term plan of owning a garbage hauling truck and expanding their service territory. As indicated in Chapter 3, such thinking is typical when working in

needs-based development. Partnership leaders tried to clarify the concept and purpose of "low hanging fruit" as part of the overall ABCD process, but Godanaw Association leaders were not ready to accept these limits. Community leaders and the Project Coordinator also explained that one could not import such a truck without legal status for the GSCP, without a new project proposal for additional funds, and without government approval. Although the GSCP was able to deliver new carts, tools, gloves, and other amenities, a truck was simply not feasible in this early phase. Both the community leaders and the Project Coordinator remained patient with these misunderstandings, recognizing that they were a natural part of grassroots community development in slum areas. Thus, even though the GSCP practiced the principles of ABCD and FBCD, sometimes the pressing need for expensive equipment overshadows theory in the minds of the needy.



Dr. Richard Kordesh with ABCD and FBCD trainees in Gedam Sefer

As it happened, government policy soon placed new limits on the way in which garbage collector associations were able to work. Within months after the above misunderstanding occurred, the government changed its strategy for coordinating garbage collection. As of 2010, garbage collectors associations are limited to collecting garbage from a specific number of houses, and an association cannot collect garbage outside its allocated geographic area. Fees are collected by *kebele* administrations, rather than by the associations. In turn, the associations are paid by the *kebeles* according to the volume of garbage that each association collects. Some garbage collectors associations have attempted to lobby to change this policy. Nonetheless, the policy change by the *Kebele* administration helped Godanaw members, who were upset about not receiving a mechanized waste removal vehicle, understand that their long-term plan for a garbage truck would have to be authorized by government policy.

Whether mounted from the inside-out or outside-in, community development processes inevitably encounter disputes. The Project Coordinator, GSCP leaders, and members of the garbage collector associations gradually worked through this disagreement. However, it does raise a lesson for practice based on the type of locally driven approaches advocated by ABCD and FBCD. When residents who are not used to being free to vocally express their needs and wants, are encouraged to do so – and in turn, those desires are affirmed as legitimate by outside facilitators –unrealistic expectations can develop about how soon or to what degree all of their plans can be implemented.

Car Washers Associations

At one time, there were eight car washers associations within the Gedam Sefer neighborhood. However, near the beginning of the start of GSCP discussions, the work sites of most of the car washer associations were changed when road construction disrupted their usual places of business. Previously, the members of the associations were unemployed youth who dropped out of school, and most were involved in petty crimes such as pick-pocketing, group fighting, shoplifting, high alcohol consumption, and rape and so on. Prior to forming their associations, some members cleaned cars on the roadside and within their neighborhoods. Two car washers associations, with 65 and 22 members respectively, agreed to engage in the partnership process, and each association delegated four representatives.

The Sebara Babur Association, with 22 members, became the only active car washers association in the GSCP. They formed their organization to reform themselves through legitimate employment. The association had a management body elected by its members, its own internal bylaws, and legal status approved by the *Kebele* and sub-city administration. Since members work according to their bylaws, each member was expected to respect the association's working hours, and their customer's property. They may not chew khat in the work area, or come to work after consuming alcoholic beverages. Observing their marked changes in behavior, community members and children value and respect the members of Sebara Babur as productive citizens. Members advise other unemployed youth and children within their neighborhood not to waste their time idly and not to be involved in unhealthy activities. These youth pride themselves on their positive reputation in the community.



Sebara Babur Car Washers Association meets with community workers, BeteMicahel Markos and Mawura Buchi

The representatives of Sebara Babur attended a one-day discussion on business plans. Next, the Partnership leaders and the Project Coordinator conducted a three-day meeting to prepare their business plan in Amharic and English. The Project Coordinator interviewed each member and prepared short biographies and information about the association. The Sebara Babur Association's business plan describes their development and their attitudes about their experiences. It states their efforts to make their association strong. The business plan was discussed and agreed upon by all members. Leaders of the association also asked some of their longtime customers and other community members to share their attitudes about Sebara Babur. The GSCP offered to publish

this material as a booklet, but the association decided to wait until the Partnership obtained its legal status. The short-term "low hanging fruit" for Sebara Babur was the purchase of two coveralls for each of the 22 members.

Certificate in Urban Community Development

During the waiting period for the new organization, it was important to keep working and build the capacity of the community to assume its future leadership role. Consulting with the Project Coordinator, community leaders wanted to train some members in community development to be ready at such time when legal status for the GSCP would be secured. The training focused on strengthening member skills and building their capacity as community development workers. All adult members of the Partnership were invited to apply for four months of training as urban community development workers. An agreement was made with a local nongovernmental organization, the Integrated Holistic Approach-Urban Development Program, to offer a government-approved Certificate in Urban Community Development (IHA-UDP). The training content covers the following specific courses:

- Urban problems of developing countries
- Concepts of urban development
- Characteristics of urban poverty
- Data collection techniques and use
- Seminar on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health
- Community-led development planning and management
- Basic legal training
- Civic and moral education
- Seminar on community-centered advocacy and child rights

The Training Institute scheduled the training for four months, but the actual training took five months. Six of the eight trainees were unemployed. Of the four women, two were widows, one was married, and one was single. Of the four men, two were married and two were single. Six of the trainees had completed high school, and two trainees had a tenth grade education.

While the eight community members were in training, they also participated in an action research project led by Wassie Kebede, a doctoral student and lecturer at the School of Social Work at AAU. Trainees designed their own bi-weekly discussion sessions, which were related to their in-class training at IHA-UDP. Each trainee presented a summary of his or her challenges and accomplishments, and the strategies each person utilized to address the challenges they faced during the training in urban community development. To apply their lecture-based learning in practice, the trainees carried out community development and mobilization activities. Working in groups of four, the trainees carried out field assessments in their neighborhoods. They collected and analyzed data and presented it in meetings every two weeks with Wassie Kebede.

The eight trainees assessed the situation of elderly people, and found approximately 40 very poor elderly people who needed social and economic support. Each week, the trainees agreed to volunteer to help eight of the elderly persons who did not have adequate income or a relative living nearby. Services given during their training field placement included washing clothes,

cleaning house, and preparing coffee. By using the assets of time, labor, and money of community leaders to support weaker members of the community, this represented a positive move in adding volunteerism to community development. The trainees also organized other volunteer groups to collect used clothes for the elderly. They held a discussion with children who were members of the GSCP Children's Drama Club and asked them to join in giving voluntary help to the elderly. Working with the adult trainees, children convinced their parents to donate used clothes.

To help impoverished elders who are living alone, the trainees developed a proposal for elderly support and have been working over the long term to link this proposal to the community projects of the Partnership. On August 13, 2009, five trainees presented their action research to those attending the Integrated Community Development and Child Welfare Model of Practice meeting, a program funded by the Oak Foundation and EveryChild UK. They presented their learning and understanding of participatory community development and gender sensitivity for child welfare in Ethiopia.

Reflecting on the importance of obtaining a Certificate in Urban Community Development, the trainees reported that the training gave them a broader perspective of the challenges of urban development, and ways to look for alternative solutions to problems. This represented a great input for their future endeavors, and the group is ready to contribute their share in alleviating community problems "from the inside out." The training has given them an opportunity to use their strengths and capabilities by focusing on their assets, instead of concentrating only on problems or what they or their community lacks. Since their training as urban community development workers included skills in generating income, improving neighborhood sanitation, and housekeeping, the trainees plan to start petty trading or small business and improve their housekeeping in order to bring about a change of attitude in them and in their families.

Chapter 5. ABCD with Children

The fullest blossoming of the ABCD, and to a more limited extent, the FBCD process, has unfolded thus far with children. The open and intensive, children-led assessment and planning process eventually created an energetic, powerful, and highly participatory process using the theatre arts. This change did not have to wait for the Partnership to obtain formal legal status. Children were ready to act, and gradually many parents became enthusiastic supporters.

The process of forming Gedam Sefer Community Partnership involved community groups, many of which included children. Overall, the discussion process with adult community members such as *Iddir* leaders community elders, youth, garbage collectors and car washers, presented many difficulties such as the lack of full commitment and suspicions about the true nature of the partnership. In contrast, the discussion and partnership process that occurred with the volunteer children was completely different. As noted in Chapter 2, children served as full members of the Core Group and as observers in the Technical Committee as a way of acquainting themselves with leadership. The children also requested to lead their own discussions and establish their own ABCD planning process.



ABCD and FBCD mapping by children puts children at the center of the development process



Youth present their list of problems affecting children in Gedam Sefer

Engagement with children began on December 27, 2007 with 28 children ages 7 to 14. In January 2008, discussions continued with 56 children, age 7 to 14 representing grades 4 to 9. Most of the participants were girls (60 percent). At first, the engagement process with children was challenging since usually whoever calls the meeting leads the discussion and sets the agenda. However, in accord with the ABCD principles, the discussion was to be led by the children themselves. The Project Coordinator insisted that the children nominate or elect their own facilitators and conduct discussions pertaining to their issues of interest. They should also try to identify their own, their community's and institution's assets and strengths, gaps, and

possible solutions to these issues. The first day, the children resisted, but after they realized they were given the authority and the opportunity to express their views, their discussions continued in a manner that exceeded expectations. They elected six facilitators (three girls and three boys). No one told them to keep a gender balance, but they insisted on equal representation. When they

asked for clarifications, the Project Coordinator and some devoted community elders responded. Nevertheless, when they asked for answers, the adults raised further questions to encourage them to discuss and comment on whatever they felt was correct.



The children's vision of a Youth Center and a community free of child abuse

Their discussion started late in the afternoon on December 27, 2007 and continued on consecutive Saturdays and sometimes on Sundays. On January 26, 2008, they presented their findings to eight members of the Technical Committee, and subsequently to *Iddir* leaders, their parents, and school principals.

The process with the children was dynamic. They were fully committed and active in their participation. As leaders of their own discussion, children had little to fear or hide. Their discussion was straightforward. Within a couple of days, they identified their strengths, problems, gaps, and possible solutions to address these gaps from within their community. Their ABCD

assessment concluded that the Gedam Sefer neighborhoods have many potential assets and strengths. These include time, space (schools and *kebele* halls), youth with different skills, elders and women with different traditional skills, institutions, small business, and so on. Children have skills and talents in playing sports and composing short plays. They are committed to contribute their labor to clean their neighborhood make it safe and healthy. This process demonstrated to the adult community members that the skills and talents of their children are their *most important assets*.



Presenting the children's vision to school principals and adult community members in Gedam Sefer

Children also played an active role in convincing the adult community members of the validity of their perceptions by identifying and presenting their own strengths and those of their families, schools, and neighborhoods. Their presentations were very interesting. The children employed socio-drama, poems, art, and drawings to present their strengths, deficiencies, and possible solutions. Their ability to use different techniques in gathering data, processing information and presenting findings indicated their potential to become excellent action researchers. These presentations triggered other community members to follow their footsteps in the ABCD engagement process by developing bylaws for the new organization. The active ability of

children to identify their strengths, needs and possible solutions also encouraged some of community-based institutions to take practical steps. Based on the children's appeal for support,

three schools volunteered to provide space for children to conduct their Summer Learning Program in July and August 2008.

Origins of the Children's Theatre Group

Summer Learning Program 2008

During their assessment, the children stressed three major gaps associated with their learning. First, their school libraries did not have appropriate books. Second, their mathematics and English language skills were weak. Third, their major concern was that they did not have a place to discuss, play and participate in activities that improve their life skills. An outcome of the children's ABCD planning process was their request for improved English learning opportunities and recreational activities during the summer. During their presentation to the school principals, they requested for improved English learning opportunities and recreational activities during the summer. They stressed this issue with the following statement:

If we have just a small room, then more will develop later, since the alphabet starts from a, then b. The training could be drama, arts, coaching, etc. If schools could give us a permission to use just one room to use it outside school hours, weekends and holidays, together with community leaders will take responsibility of taking care of the property and will not use the electric power to avoid extra cost on the school.

The children's concern aligned with those of many adult community members, parents, and *Iddir* leaders. Thus, as a "low hanging fruit" project, the Partnership planned and implemented a six-week intensive language immersion program for children in July and August 2008. The Summer Learning Program (SLP) provided a safe environment for promoting academic, social and emotional well-being. Bethlehem School served as the programming site for daily classroom activities. This location was readily accessible to all participants and recognized within the community as a safe and welcoming space. The SLP met five days per week from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm for six weeks.

Volunteer staff planned and implemented the SLP. One hundred children from the slum neighborhoods in Gedam Sefer attended the SLP. With direction from community leaders, Richelle Haines, a MSW student from Loyola University, Chicago, IL, USA, served as the lead teacher. Her responsibilities included determining the placement for each child, planning daily lessons, and providing program oversight. Nathan Haines, M.A. provided educational expertise by serving as the instructor for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). He ensured that all voluntary staff carried out TESOL best practices. Additionally, three visiting staff contributed more than three weeks of voluntary service. Johnna Main, JD student



Lead teacher, Richelle Haines, with Summer Learning Program students

at The John Marshall School of Law, Atlanta, GA, USA, led two weeks of drama workshops, which included teaching the youth how to write and perform their own plays. Sara Bosaw, RN from Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, IL, USA, and Jarmila Szkutova, MSW, Loyola University, Chicago, IL, USA, presented Healthy Living workshops, including drama and art.



Mulu Yeneabat (left), Richelle & Nathan Haines (center) with Junior Leaders who volunteered in Summer Learning Program

One of the SLP goals involved training student volunteers in leadership and teaching skills, so that they might be able to lead the SLP and work towards making the program self-sufficient in the future. Five high school graduates from Gedam Sefer participated as junior leaders. Pairs of leaders were placed in classrooms with trained staff in order to facilitate translation, ensure cultural compatibility of the material, and learn classroom

techniques for leading groups. One day a week, junior leaders modeled what they learned by being the lead facilitator of a group of youth.

Using a hands-on educational philosophy, the children participated in team building activities including sports. The 100 children also created short plays on relevant social problems such as girl's education and child trafficking. They developed leadership and interpersonal skills while leading and interacting in small groups. They went on several field trips to learn about Ethiopian history and culture and connect with the broader society outside of their slum living conditions in Gedam Sefer. For most of the children, the opportunity to visit the Addis Ababa University Ethnography Museum, Natural Science Museum, and Natural History Museum, was their first such experience.



Boy with creative butterfly art in the Summer Learning Program

Near the end of the SLP, the children asked to perform their drama productions on graduation day. They composed their own plays and rehearsed them. For the closing session, the children wrote and presented two short plays (one in English and one in Amharic) for their parents, community residents, other students, and teachers at Bethlehem Community School. The children's plays were so interesting that the adult leaders asked the children to rehearse their plays and present them again so the plays could be recorded. Different schools were approached to secure a place for the children to practice their plays, and the Awelya Muslim Mission School gave two classrooms for rehearsals on weekends and outside of school hours. Two groups of

children rehearsed their plays for four weekends. It was at this time that one group of children decided on their own to compose a new play about a stepmother and her interaction with her stepdaughter. The children's commitment to improving their social skills through theatre started at this time.



Democratic classrooms allowed students to have a voice in matters of importance

Providing children and youth with opportunities for healthy relationships with caring adults is a strong preventive factor for children who are at-risk of the many ill effects of poverty. Relationships were fostered through democratic classrooms that allowed students to have a voice in matters of importance, and through daily recreational activities and team sports. The SLP demonstrated that “what a community wants” can be met with little expense if available assets are properly utilized and if there is a common understanding and willingness to “care enough to act” on the part of the community. The English language communication skills for these students in grades 4 through 9 improved in

the classroom and through the performance of short plays. The children's creativity and commitment to producing their own plays was nothing short of amazing.

Training the First Cohort of Children at the Candle Theatre Center

At the rehearsal for the SLP closing ceremony, a young boy came forward as a leader with other children and asked Dr. Butterfield for theatre and drama training. The children said that they wanted to form a drama club, but they needed training. Observing their effort alongside this request, the Project Coordinator and the Technical Committee discussed the possibility of providing short-term drama and theatre training for children with Dr. Butterfield. Following the principles of ABCD, the Partnership responded to the children's request for theatre training. Since this capability was not available within the Gedam Sefer community or among the Partnership members, an agreement for two months of training with the Candle Theatre Training Center was signed. The training cost per child was Birr 200 per month (\$20 USD), but the Partnership negotiated for 25 percent discount and paid Birr 150 (\$15 USD) per child per month for two months. In the third week of December 2008, 27 children enrolled and started training on weekends and after school on Friday afternoons. Originally, the training was planned for two months, but because of the excellent progress and serious efforts of the children, it was extended to four months with a month of additional sponsorship by Dr. Richard Kordesh, and another month contributed by the Candle Theatre.

All children were required to have the consent of their parents. When the program launched, all parents were invited. Ayalneh Mulatu, Director of the Candle Theatre Training Center, the Project Coordinator, and the Partnership committee leaders explained the objective of the drama



Drama production on street children

training to the parents and invited community members. The GSCP leaders instructed the Candle Theatre trainers not to change the content of the children's plays, but to focus their training on theatre performance techniques. During their training, the children modified the play about street children that they wrote and presented during the SLP.

They also prepared short plays entitled, "Child Abuse for Begging as Income Generation" and "Child Sexual Abuse by Intimate Family Members." Throughout the process of composing new plays, the children generated all of the ideas. No adult or Partnership leaders advised the children to compose

or perform their plays on issues associated with children. Since the children lived in a poor community, they knew these things from their daily life. They chose these issues on their own, and from the perspective of children, they made a great effort to communicate important messages on these issues to their community, parents, and peers.

Twenty-two children successfully completed the drama training at the Candle Theatre. Their graduation ceremony was conducted in the presence of their families, peers, and other invited community members. The children presented their play on street children. Their parents and other community members and children asked if there were similar opportunities for other groups of children. They also asked if the children who just performed could have additional training.

Expanding the Training with More Involvement of the Community and Parents

The Partnership leaders, together with the Project Coordinator and the Community Worker, thoroughly discussed this request. In consultation with Dr. Butterfield, the Partnership decided to extend the first group's training and to add another group of children for training in drama and theatre skills focusing on child and family issues. Notices inviting new groups of children, ages 10 to 14 in grades 6 through 8, were posted within the neighborhood. All members of the first group had the opportunity for a second round of training. Parents were informed that their children could participate if they took a turn once a month to supervise the training activities. They agreed. From the first group, 18 children applied, but three withdrew after attending a few days. Twenty-five new children applied. Three boys were older than the required grade levels, so in consultation with the Candle Theatre Training Center, 22 children (19 girls and 3 boys) were interviewed. Of these, four girls and one boy withdrew for different reasons. The new group included 15 girls and 2 boys who were dynamic and eager to learn. They were given a play about a king and the community, which was composed by their teacher. They mastered it within a month, and presented it to their parents and to different audiences using the Candle Theatre auditorium. Turn by turn, two parents assisted with the training sessions, and after each session were asked for comments. All gave positive feedbacks and advised their children to take this excellent opportunity to improve their life skills.

The theatre and drama training included the ethics of the art, the moral values expected from the actor, the advantages of physical exercise, and so on. Parents and guardians who observed the training were satisfied and testified that their children do not get this type of training at their schools. As one parent stated, "Thanks to the trainers, my child is getting what I could not give him and now he has a difference in his behavior." More than ten mothers reported positive behavioral changes in their children. They testified of this in front of the public when their children were performing drama for their neighbors at the theatre auditorium and at the *kebele* hall.

Of all the parents, one father was reluctant when his children started to attend the Summer Learning Program in 2008. His twin children, a girl and a boy, were asked to get the consent of their parents to join the program. The girl asked her father to give his consent, and the boy asked his mother, but that day, the mother was working and could not come. When the father came, he gave his consent for his daughter but was reluctant to consent to his son's participation. He said, "I know my son and I am not ready to let him participate. I want him to attend his school only. I am afraid he may give more attention to your things than school." However, when the community leaders and his daughter asked her father to let him try it, he agreed. Later, the community leaders told the Project Coordinator the boy was restless and quarreled with everybody in the neighborhood. Since she knows how to handle him, he is only afraid of his mother. Angry about his son's behavior, the father used to beat him severely, but they reported that this did not improve his son's behavior. When asked to give his consent for his son's participation in the January 2009 theatre and training program, the father was hesitant and asked, "What about his school program?" The answer was, "This is outside school hours and with careful supervision."

When the children presented their plays in public at the *kebele* hall, this father had been observing his son's behavior and his school performance for a year and half. Just when the program was about to end, he asked all the audience and the community leaders to wait "just a minute." He asked for the microphone, and started crying rather than speaking. This father started his speech by sobbing and finished it with tears of joy since he could not contain his satisfaction and the peace he now experienced with his son. The public was silent and gave him attention:

"I am sorry for my hesitance from the beginning. When I was asked to give my consent for my son to be engaged in this program, I was reluctant since both I, and the entire neighborhood, know my son's behavior. It is not a secret. I asked 'What about his school? Doesn't this affect his performance?' You told me, 'No, it is on the weekends.' With reluctance but with respect for the Partnership leaders, I said 'Let's try it.' But, what I gained and learned, and what my family and my neighbors got is complete peace with my son. This Partnership is a school more than school."

Performing in Public: Children Learn to Negotiate

Out of the 35 children enrolled in the drama and theater training, 26 met on their own accord and came up with the idea to organize a GSCP Children's Theatre and Drama Club. They also included four children who were not in the training group. In the first week of September 2009,

the children conducted discussions without adult initiation or presence in the Partnership office. On September 10, the eve of the Ethiopian New Year, they pledged to “say good-bye to our previous bad behaviors” and to have good manners and help each other. They asked each other to speak about their bad practices and performances in the last year. Each child talked about what he or she wanted to learn from his or her experiences and the personal changes they wanted to make as a member of the Gedam Sefer Children’s Theatre and Drama Club. If a child did not admit some of his or her bad behaviors, they reminded each other of their observations of negative behavior. Those children who did not want to pass through this process were not accepted as members, and of the 35 drama-trained children, 26 became members of the club. They also accepted four non-trained children from their neighborhood. All this was done without input or direction from the Partnership community leaders or the Project Coordinator.

The children discussed the rules for being a club member. They pledged to continue and improve their academic performance without any failing grades, do their assignments before coming to club activities, assist their parents, and get permission before coming to the club every time. They also promised to be good role models in their neighborhood for their school peers, assist each other in academic exercises, respect elders, and avoid misbehaving friends. They pledge to inform their family whenever they wanted to go anywhere, including their peers’ homes.

After their agreement to start a club, they practiced plays, and discussed using Saint George churchyard for a public performance. Later, they asked the *Kebele* administration to permit them to use the *Kebele* hall for a public show. When they received permission, they presented short plays titled, "Being a Corpse to Cheat," "The Spoiled Daughter" and "The Spoiling Father and the Evil Stepmother." After the show, they asked the *Kebele* officials if they could use the hall to practice their plays. After a series of appeals, the children received permission to use the hall for three half-days each week, and to present their shows to the public when the hall was not being used. From this time forward, the children used the *Kebele* hall to perform their public shows and to practice their plays outside of school hours and on holidays.

As mentioned previously, the Partnership did not have a hall and could not get permission to use schools for meetings because it lacked legal status. Even though schools provided space throughout 2008 and early in 2009, school officials were reluctant to do so after mid-2009. With the change in local government, school officials were wary of giving permission. After the performance, the children asked for comments from the audience. The *Kebele* officials expressed their admiration of the children’s performance including the topics that they choose. Then, the children explained to the *Kebele* officials that they presented this show by practicing in the open air or within the churchyard, all the while tolerating the interruption of onlookers. One child stated, “If you (the *Kebele*) give us the chance to use this hall, we can be more successful and you might be proud of us. We can practice our performances here, and show it free of charge to our neighborhood peers and community members. This will contribute to the wellbeing of the neighborhood children.” Even though the *Kebele* officials had previously given them permission to use the hall, they did not have much opportunity to use it, since other activities such as *Kebele* traditional music clubs and unexpected meetings prevented their use of the hall. Consequently, the *Kebele* officials assigned their Culture and Sports Desk officer to facilitate the use of the hall by the Gedam Sefer Children’s Theatre Club. The children gained full right to use the hall.



Children pose for a photo after presenting their plays for the President of the Oak Foundation

The children have presented their plays at the Candle Training Center Pushken Hall, *Kebele* 03/09 Hall, and at Addis Ababa University's Akaki PhD Campus. Their audiences at Pushken and the *kebele* halls were community members and the supporters of the performing arts. At Akaki, 36 children performed four drama productions for 100 trainees from government offices, child welfare workers from Oak partner NGOs, and community development workers during the Integrated Community Development and Child Welfare Training (CD-CW Project). The *Kebele* and sub-city administration also invited them for guest performances during public gatherings and forums on children's issues.

In April 2010, the Gedam Sefer Community Children's Drama and Theatre Club competed with 13 other groups in a competition organized by the *Kebele* administration on the topic of "Culture and Democracy for Development." The children wrote the play themselves and won the competition. Two groups went on to compete at the sub-city level, and among the 20 contestants, the Gedam Sefer Children's Drama and Theatre Club took first place. The children also competed with 10 sub-city clubs at Addis Ababa City level. They took first place and were awarded a trophy.

Original Plays Written and Performed by the Children

1. ***A Girl and Her Family***. This was a drama composed in English by the children in-group. The play focuses about attitudinal differences of parents toward their sons and daughters. This particular family allows their son to play and go wherever he wants at any time, but the daughter has many chores when she comes home from school. She must assist her mother in preparing food, cleaning the house and the compound, washing clothes, and so on. She is not allowed to visit her friends and cannot go to library on weekends. The play is 10 minutes long.
2. ***Is There Anyone for Children?*** This drama was composed by children in a group and written in Amharic by one of the girls. The Candle Training Center modified the drama in consultation with the children. It focused on the issues associated with street children, demonstrating that children run away from home for different reasons. Most were on the street because of their parents' deaths and economic problems. A few ran to the streets because they believe that living on the street is freedom from



"Is There Anyone for Children?"

family control. Some joined the street when parents can no longer tolerate their acts of misconduct such as pick-pocketing and drug abuse. The play also showed that children are trafficked from rural villages with false promise of education, attractive working conditions and income. The play is 50 minutes long.

3. ***Child Trafficking for Begging.*** This play was based on a real story of failed child trafficking of one of the children in the group. When she found him in the neighborhood, a woman tricked the child. She was carrying packs of things. Observing the load she was carrying, this child felt sorry for her. The woman realized his concern and asked him to give her a hand. He was kind and agreed to help her just a little further from his neighborhood, but instead, she took him very far. When he asked her to let him go, she told him that they were going back to his neighborhood. Luckily, a community member from his neighborhood saw him and brought him home. The story demonstrates that children and community members should pay attention to unusual activities within their neighborhood. Children should also inform their parents about their daily routine and particularly the new experiences and people they encounter. The play is 7 minutes long.
4. ***Silence and its Consequences.*** A group of children composed this play. The story showed the existence of child sexual abuse by family members. Even fathers sexually abused their daughters. When such malpractice occurs, both the family members and their neighbors keep silent. No one attempts to advise or intervene on behalf of the abused child. Community members gossip about it but dare not try to stop the abuser. But when abused children can no longer bear the trauma, they often commit or attempt to commit suicide. In this play, the father sexually abused his daughter and she has no one to discuss it with since her mother has passed away. Since his daughter is pregnant, the father realized that community members are gossiping about his abuse, so he forced his daughter to have an abortion. In the process of the abortion, the girl died, but before she dies, she writes a letter to her youngest brother informing him that their father sexually abused her. The son was furious and tried to kill his father. They fight. Both are wounded and taken to the hospital. The play is 15 minutes long.
5. ***Being a Corpse to Cheat.*** Three boys in the neighborhood are addicted to alcohol and smoking, and known pickpockets. One day they were not lucky in their craft of stealing. After a long discussion, they agreed to act as if one of them is dead, but argued about whom to make a corpse. One of them entered the coffin, but since they did not have money to transport the “corpse” to his birthplace, the two boys were not in a position to bury the corpse. When they saw people coming, they cry and ask for help. Some people gave them whatever money they have. Later, two elderly men came out of *Tej Bet*, a local bar that serves a honey-brewed drink, and they are drunk. When they saw the men, the two boys started crying. The men inquired about the death, but the two boys tell them different things. One said it is due to too much drugs and alcohol, while the other said that it is because of HIV/AIDS. Even though these old men have consumed too much *Tej*, they suspect something and ask to see the corpse to see if they knew the dead boy. Without realizing what these intoxicated old men were planning, the boys opened the coffin. Then one of the men touched the “corpse” and felt the warmth of the body and the heartbeat. This man took his friend aside and told him that these kids are joking and cheating. The two old men go

back and kicked the "corpse" very hard, and jumping up, the boy tried to run away. The men kick all three boys and instruct them to kneel down, and then ask them why they did this. The boys confess that they are alcohol and drug addicts and pickpockets. Since they could not satisfy their desires, they agreed to cheat to get money. The elder men advised the boys to quit such bad practices and asked them if they are ready to work as daily laborers. All agreed and the men took them to the *Kebele* administration's construction site and negotiated for their employment.

6. ***The Mischievous Boyfriend.*** One of the girls composed this play. Three sisters had the same boyfriend but do not know it. When they discussed their dates, one told her sisters about her boyfriend's kindness and beauty and how hard working he is. The other one says, "If you see my boyfriend, you will abandon yours and look for someone like mine." Their boyfriend promised the girls that they would marry soon. It seems that one of the sisters has been finalizing her marriage ceremony. Based on this she wanted to introduce him as her fiancé to her sisters. On the way home, the boyfriend's younger brother accompanied him. When they entered the girl's house, his younger brother was shocked since he realized that his brother's girlfriends are all siblings. The bride's sisters are also shocked when their sister introduced him as her fiancé. Being furious, they kicked their mischievous boyfriend out of the house and agreed to introduce their friends to each other before making commitments and intimate relationships in the future. The play is 7 minutes long.



"The Mischievous Boyfriend"

7. ***Street Vending Girl.*** This play was about two daughters and an old man who did not care about his family needs. The mother made homemade bread and fried barley for sale. The older girl sold it by moving from hotel to hotel. Her younger sister assisted her mother in preparing the food. The father gave his wife only Birr 50 per month. Even though the mother and her daughter were trying their best, life was very hard. Realizing their situation, a girl in the neighborhood tried to influence the older girl to engage in prostitution. For many days, she refused. But one day, a man appeared who wanted to date her. He was ready to pay her Birr 50 for each date. The girl did not reject the offer. She became pregnant and did not know what to do. Her mother cursed the day she was born. She wished she were dead. Late in the evening, the father came home intoxicated and asked for food. She gave him a piece of bread. His wife said that even this is too much for him because his daughter was pregnant, and he should prepare for medical expenses and for the expenses of an additional family member. The father jumped up to beat his daughter and his wife for their 'shameful' sins. The mother was furious and said that he should be blamed and that he should punish himself, not the daughter, or her. The neighbors heard this and came to assist. The pregnant girl informed them that the pimp is a girl in the neighborhood but she does not know her real name or address. When asked why she did it, she said that life was unbearable. The pimp girl told her that she could get income to support her family, and she

did not think she would get pregnant so soon. They advised her parents to accept what has happened and to discuss the future well-being of the family. The father tried to defend himself, but the neighbors told him it is because of his negligence that his daughter's life was complicated. He accepted his mistakes and promised his family and the neighbors that he will allocate money for the necessary expenses.

8. ***The Spoiled Daughter***. Children composed this play as a group. The story was about a father who is taking care of a daughter and son. His wife has passed away. He has fulfilled his daughter's requests at whatever cost, but has neglected his son. His daughter's classmates and neighbors tried to tell the father that he is spoiling his daughter, but he refused their advice. The girl became pregnant, and when the father is informed, he becomes bedridden and paralyzed. He asked for his son's mercy since he did not accept his and the neighbors' advice. The play is 10 minutes long.



"The Spoiled Daughter"

9. ***The Spoiling Father and the Evil Stepmother***. Children in a group composed this play. This story was about two different families. One family consisted of a father and his daughter. His wife has passed away and he has not married since he is afraid that if he marries, his wife might abuse his daughter. In the meantime, the daughter has not been attending school regularly. When his colleagues and neighbors informed him of this, he was not ready to accept it. He went to her school and inquired. The school administrators and teachers informed him that she was not in school that day. Furious, he waited for his daughter to arrive at home and asked her where she has been. She lied and said she was coming home from school. This made him mad and he packed her belongings and told her that he knows she is not attending classes and that she is dating several boys, taking drugs and smoking. Even though she asked for mercy, he does not want to see her anymore. He chased her out of the house, and she carried her belongings to the street.

The other family consisted of an abusive stepmother, the father, son, and stepson. The stepson ran away from home. There, he found the spoiled girl roaming the street and asked her why she joined the street. The two youth found others living on the street and sought refuge in a shelter. All shared their life experiences and saw life as gloomy. One of the boys said that he has been hired as a daily laborer, and his friends all can join him. All agreed except the girl and one boy who was the son of a well-to-do family. He joined the street because his family could not tolerate his pick-pocketing. He decided to ask his family to pardon him and promised to follow his parents' instructions and accept their supervision. The spoiled girl informed her new friends that since her father never even asked her to do household tasks, it would be unimaginable for her to be a daily laborer. The boys told her

that she would learn it the hard way and promise to train her. Except for the boy who asked pardon from his family, all agreed and were employed. The play is 20 minutes long.

10. ***If the Guest Does Not Like Children, He/She Should Not Come to Our House.***

Traditionally, when a visitor or guest comes to a family house, children are expected to show good manners, be silent and eat separately. Based on this practice, most families arrange separate tables for children and adults. However, in one family with a son and two daughters, adults shared the same table with their children. When their father's uncle was invited to dinner, the parents ask their children to eat separately. The younger daughter refused and argued that she is not comfortable eating with her siblings. She does not like to take her dinner without sharing it with her mother and father. After a lot of negotiation, it seemed that the daughter would eat her food with her brother and sister. However, when the food was presented at two different tables in the presence of the guest, she changed her mind and joined her father and mother at the guest's table. At this time, both parents cannot do anything to punish her in the presence of this guest.

The next week, an old woman came to visit the family. The small daughter was eager to play with the old woman and did not give her mother time to chat with her friend. She asked the old woman why her hair is gray, why her face looks the way it does and so on. The mother was furious and embarrassed, so she asked her daughter to call her father who is in the backyard. The girl answered that her father has not come back from work. Then the mother asked her daughter to play with her brother and sister. The girl replied, "They are in school and I want to play with this beautiful old woman." This time, the mother loses her patience, but she does not want to discipline her daughter in front of a guest. So, she asked the woman to go and see if her neighbor is at home. When the guest left, the mother asked her daughter to choose a punishment for her misbehavior. The daughter asked her mother "Should I be punished because I share a table with a guest?" "Yes," says the mother. "What is wrong in sharing a table with a guest? Do guests not have children? Or was she not happy since I ask her questions?" The mother replied, "No, they have children and you did not snatch food." "Is it since I play with a guest that I should be punished? Is it since I tried to ask what I think is new for me that I should be punished?" The mother is puzzled and kept quiet for a moment. Taking this opportunity, the girl said, "If a guest is not ready to eat with children or play with children, then she or he should not go to a house with children, but should stay at home." Then, she ran away.



"If the Guest Does Not Like Children..."

11. ***An Old Lady with a Daughter and a Son.*** An elderly woman supported two children from the alms that she received. She sends her children to school. The girl has friends from a middle income family, and she did not want her friends to know about her mother's occupation. Her brother was not worried about this. Since the old woman is blind, her son or daughter must take her to the churchyard early in the morning and bring her home late in the afternoon. Her son usually accompanied her because the daughter fears that her peers will

see her and label her as the daughter of a beggar. What the girl did not realize is that her peers know her brother and often see him taking care of his mother. Whenever her peers asked her if they could come to her home, they also asked about her mother. She told them that her mother comes home late from work, since her place of employment was far from home. Her peers realize that she was doing this to avoid being labeled. They told her that they know all about her mother and that they appreciated the fact that her mother enrolled her children in school, despite her desperate situation. They affirmed that they like and love their friend as a human being, not as the daughter of someone. Afterwards, the girl started assisting her brother in taking and bringing back her mother to and from the churchyard. The play is about 20 minutes long.

12. ***Song about HIV***. This was a song composed by the children. The song warned youth and community members to discuss HIV and its consequences openly, before the disease spreads and becomes uncontrollable. The song with actions was about three minutes long.



Children choreograph “Song About HIV” at AAU’s Akaki PhD Campus

During the holiday season, the members reached out to 17 beggars residing in the neighborhood who were begging at the Saint George churchyard. On the Ethiopian Christmas (January 7, 2010), they asked their parents for food prepared for the holidays and placed it in their lunchboxes. They contributed coins to purchase soft drinks, and invited beggars, *Kebele* officials, members of the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership, and their peers to a Christmas celebration. They presented short poems, entertained with jokes, sang songs, and performed the play entitled, “An Old Beggar Lady with a Daughter and a Son.” Afterwards, they dismissed the community members and their peers and asked their beggar guests and the Partnership leaders to stay. They shared the soft drinks and the food they brought, and distributed used clothes to their beggar guests.

Conclusion

During the SLP, the children learned how to form friendly and positive activity groups. They improved their ability to communicate and express their ideas in English. The children and their parents reported that the children gave more attention to their lessons. The drama and theatre training also gave them the opportunity to explore neighborhood assets, gaps and possible solutions. When the children began writing and performing, they discussed what the plays would be about. Without any advice or suggestions from adults, the children identified child well-being as the overarching theme of their plays.

Some children, who exhibited delinquent behavior in the community prior to their participation in the children's drama group, became role models for other children after they had a constructive outlet for their actions. Many mothers expressed appreciation regarding the positive development in their children, and did not have words to express their gratitude. The children decided among themselves that they should have good manners at home, in their neighborhoods and schools.

They raised the issue of beggars and poor elderly people. They provided food and used clothes for the elderly. Members of the Gedam Sefer Children Theatre and Drama Club did not think that Christmas should be a time to enjoy when a less fortunate person does not have a family, or someone who could remember him or her, or share his or her problems and memories.



Gedam Sefer Children's Theatre group (with GSCP leaders) poses at AAU's Akaki PhD Campus after performing for 100 trainees attending the "Integrated Child Welfare & Community Development Model of Practice" funded by the Oak Foundation.

Chapter 6. Action Research and Field Education

A community partnership involves a mix of formal and informal relationships among academic units, administrators, community associations, NGOs, and other entities. In the few years of the GSCP initiative tested, formal arrangements depended to a certain extent on how the grant funds were to flow. When it became clear that Addis Ababa University was not to become the formal partner that some had originally envisioned, the question arose about how to still engage the university's assets – its faculty and graduate students – in positive ways that satisfied the demand upon them to carry out research in response to community needs. This section recounts how university faculty and students were engaged, and how, despite the positive involvement of several individuals, the lack of a formal agreement with AAU had negative effects.

At the beginning of the GSCP, the plan was to formally involve the AAU School of Social Work as the primary partner with the Gedam Sefer community. Although the Partnership leaders tried on many occasions to develop an official relationship such as a Memorandum of Understanding between AAU and the GSCP, the problem remained because the Oak Foundation funds were held by The Love for Children Organization. The difficulty of transferring funds to AAU was beset by administrative problems. In addition, such a contract-for-services would have, in effect, created a relationship between The Love for Children Organization and Addis Ababa University, rather than between the Gedam Sefer community and AAU. Consequently, the Partnership engaged with School of Social Work through field education and action research.

Field Education

The School of Social Work contributed knowledge and skill development through field placement. MSW students were placed in the Gedam Sefer community every year from 2005 to 2010. During the first year, four students worked in the *Kebele* offices, and this contributed to the *Kebele* administrators' understanding of social work education. Another group of MSW students were assigned in 2006 under the supervision of the *Kebele* workers. From 2007 to 2010 after the GSCP began, five MSW students from AAU did their field placements in the Gedam Sefer community under the supervision of the Project Coordinator, Mulu Yeneabat, a trained social worker with a MSW degree. They worked with children, youth, community organizations, and schools. Their involvement included counseling children, assisting in drama training, and training community members on needs assessment skills, project design, and proposal writing.

One MSW field placement student, Elias Debebe Damtew, conducted his MSW thesis project on the community's understanding of child maltreatment with GSCP community members. His 2008 thesis is entitled, "Urban Community's Comprehension of Child Maltreatment and Neighborhood Conditions: A Study at Gedam Sefer, Arada Sub-City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia." Two international MSW students, Richelle Haines from Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois USA, and Kay Young McChesney from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri USA completed field work in Ethiopia in the summer of 2008. Kay was involved in the research efforts of AAU students. Richelle directed the Summer Learning Program for children, provided training for youth leaders, and assisted in community conversations on parenting skills.

Action Research

Another important effort made by graduate social work students consisted of action research in Gedam Sefer. Two groups of PhD students engaged in action research projects in connection with a doctoral course entitled, “Action Research and Models of Social Change.” In the first group, four students (Wassie Kebede, Emebet Mulugeta, Serkalem Bekele, and Ashenafi Hagos) worked with the community for about three months. Their main responsibilities included facilitation of community workshops and group discussions that enhanced the ability of community members to identify their strengths and weaknesses in parenting and child protection. Their action research identified a number of issues that contributed to the GSCP project design.



Meeting of community members with PhD students carrying out action research assignments

The second group of doctoral students continued the School’s involvement in action research. Their activities included identifying strengths and problems within the community, assisting the Technical Committee and Core Group in prioritizing issues for intervention, and organizing a series of community conversations. With the participation of the community, these discussions and actions contributed much to the birth of ideas, which later emerged as projects that benefited children, youth and community members at large. Doctoral students in AAU’s PhD Program in Social Work and Social Development completed course assignments and action research in Gedam Sefer. These efforts included:

- A Collective Inquiry with the Gedam Sefer Community on the Skills of Youths for Asset Based Self-Employment. (Dessalegn Negeri, Mesele Mengsteab, and Mindahun G/Tsadik, December 2007).
- The Contribution of Family Assets and Liabilities for a Healthy Child Development: An Action Research at Gedam Sefer. (Abebaw Minaye, Abraham Molla, Debebe Ero, & Mulunesh Abebe, December 2007).
- A Poor Parent's Experience in *Guddifachaa* of Gedam Sefer Orphan Child: A Case Study. (Dessalegn Negeri, December 2007).

After it became impossible to develop an official relationship with the School of Social Work, all doctoral students who had carried out course assignments in Gedam Sefer were invited to volunteer as an Action Research Team in 2009. Funds to present their research at international conferences were made available members of the Action Research Team. Wassie Kebede and Mulunesh Abebe engaged in action research with GSCP members:

- Conducting Participatory Action Research Engagement (PARE): Documenting Skills and Knowledge Building Processes (Wassie Kebede, February – November 2009)

- Exploring the Resilience of Women Living in Abusive Relationships in Gedam Sefer (Mulunesh Abebe, August – November 2009).
- Adolescent Social Networks and Sexual Practices: A Study of High School Adolescents in Addis Ababa. (Wassie Kebede, Dissertation, August 2008– July 2009).



PhD students, Mulunesh Abebe and Wassie Kebede, discuss action research in Gedam Sefer

Wassie Kebede's study of adolescent social networks and sexual practices in Gedam Sefer resulted in his doctoral dissertation. On December 2, 2009, he was awarded the first-ever doctorate in Social Work and Social Development at Addis Ababa University.

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Media Release

December 11, 2009 - ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia –

The award acknowledged AAU's revival of its School of Social Work after almost 30 years. Dr. Wassie was one of eight students admitted to the School's Doctoral Program in 2006. His successful defense marks a key step in AAU's Social Work program that began five years ago.

Dr. Wassie's research, *Adolescent Social Networks and Sexual Practices*, applies innovative Mixed Methods Research (MMR) to social networks theory to explore the sexual behavior of adolescent boys and girls in Addis Ababa.

The ceremony coincided with World AIDS Day, adding a timely perspective for policymakers and practitioners concerned with youth culture, gender issues, and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Some 200 students and staff gathered on AAU's Akaki campus as Ato Wassie defended his dissertation to jurors from three continents. These included the Chair from the United States, Prof. Alice K. Butterfield, University of Illinois at Chicago; Dr. Deirdre Kirke, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland, and Prof. Lena Dominelli, Durham University, United Kingdom, and Dean Abye Tasse, Addis Ababa University.

Jurors deliberated privately only a few minutes. "This excellent thesis is of a world-class standard," Prof. Lena Dominelli said, congratulating now Dr. Wassie. "We also congratulate Addis Ababa University for this high standard of research. The School of Social Work has strong partnerships with schools of social work throughout the world. The quality and commitment of these partners is evident in today's proceedings."

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Conclusion

Although the difficulties inherent in developing a community partnership are noted and apparent, academic course work in action research by graduate students raised important issues, built community capacity, and contributed overall to the development of the GSCP. Although the formal relationship with AAU did not materialize, ties with other international faculty were strengthened by the voluntary involvement and field placement assignments of students. Dr. Butterfield and Dr. Kordesh from the University of Illinois at Chicago integrated their training and capacity building work in Gedam Sefer with teaching at AAU and in the US. Community members valued this involvement, and trusted the academics and graduate students that worked with them as colleagues in an ongoing learning process. In short, whereas the partnership with AAU might not be as deep and formal as had been anticipated, it continued to grow and develop.

Chapter 7. Lessons Learned

A great value that a community partnership can bring to a place like Gedam Sefer is a continuous process of learning, on the part of the community as well as the academics. For the community, learning feeds the process of development, builds capacity, leads to effective project designs, establishes working relationships, and brings forth an appreciation of clear outcomes. For the academics, learning feeds the process of scholarship and teaching, including that carried out in the classroom as well as that gained in practice with residents and local leaders. The emphasis of ABCD on the recognition of gifts and assets has prompted learning about what the people already do that works and the potentials they bring to new projects. The additional incorporation of FBCD illuminates the assets and gifts of families as distinctive and important forces in building the capacity of poor communities.

Engagement with the Community

Introducing the concept of a community partnership and the idea of ABCD as a model of community development was not an easy task. In Ethiopia, universities are considered ivory towers and bastions of knowledge in the eyes of communities. At the time of the first couple of conversations with *Kebele* 03/09 officials to disclose the interest of university faculty to work with them, the then officials did not trust the group. They later reflected on what they suspected were the intentions behind these initial conversations: “We were thinking that you came just for the sake of doing your research, not to work with us.” Community members had similar feelings and were surprised when doctoral students from School of Social Work organized a workshop to present the findings of the inventory of poor women’s individual and community level skills. As some participants of the first workshop reflected, it was their first ever experience of being respected by university researchers and believing that their ideas were important.

As to the views of *Kebele* officials and community members, the first and critical step in implementing a community partnership was breaking down the negative perceptions and attitudes and establishing a trustful relationship between the community and an external group. Further, it was also important to introduce ABCD into the life of a community like Gedam Sefer that has many forms of assets, but which are not systematically organized.

Although many students and faculty members initially espoused the idea of partnership and the introduction of ABCD, very few continued to work for the realization of both ideas. An important lesson for external catalysts is to make sure that there are committed and dedicated persons who believe in trying new concepts. The efforts of students and faculty, from Ethiopia and abroad that were interested in true partnership with community members, made the Partnership successful. Leaders from inside the community and interested groups from outside the boundaries of Gedam Sefer worked together to realize ABCD and FBCD as a model of development.

The frequent turnover of officials in the *Kebele* made the process of developing a community partnership, implemented according to ABCD principles, a continuous job. This is a good lesson: the process of establishing a partnership between a given community and higher learning

institutions is not a one-time job, and government structure has a stake in driving the partnership forward or holding it back.

Communication: A Powerful Tool to Connect Ideas, Assets and People

ABCD requires convinced and committed community members, local association leaders, elders, religious leaders, business owners and local government as collaborators inside the community. It also needs external partners for knowledge, training and experience sharing and for mobilizing resources to fill the gaps. “Never to do anything that nobody wants” and listen “to what citizens care enough to act on.”¹⁶

The consecutive conversations conducted with different community members and with children are at the heart of grassroots development. By listening to “what the community wants,” external factors such as The Love For Children Organization, UIC faculty, and Oak Foundation, made resources from “outside the community” available. Grant funds were distributed for the Summer Learning Program, book distribution, children’s drama and theatre trainings, adult training in urban community development, and garbage collectors and car washer associations’ equipment and supplies.



Project Coordinator, Mulu Yeneabat, MSW, leads discussion on ABCD training with children

The continuous discussions conducted by community members encouraged both children and adults to express their skills and capabilities as well as their areas of concern, and in turn, this created trust and hope. The engagement process and the discussions were inclusive. They gave equal opportunity to all participants to express their concerns and acknowledged that everyone has gifts that can benefit the community. During the engagement process, both the internal and external partners tried to involve well-connected community members who cared about their community. The community members also identified traditional community association leaders and elders with sound leadership skills who were respected by the community.

By building trust, children and community members realized that they know more than they thought they knew. They understand that they have assets that, heretofore, they did not realize. Their previously unrealized expertise allowed them to suggest solutions to their problems and work to that end. All this was the result of listening patiently.

¹⁶ Green, et al., (2006). p. 93

The Community Leadership Role in Promoting ABCD and FBCD

Ideally, ABCD and FBCD call for the creation of many diverse leadership opportunities for children, family members, association representatives, and other individual community members. Although community people genuinely led the GSCP, it did not foster as broad and diverse a network of active leaders as hoped for originally. Rather, community leadership in the project was characterized by two or three core individuals working very closely and for many hours per month with the Project Coordinator. In addition, within each of the major committees, a few individuals assumed highly involvement in leadership roles, while other members reduced the time and intensity of their participation. The photo shows three of the GSCP's most dedicated community leaders: Assefa Mengesha (left), Fikre Kebede (right), and Yeshihareg Negash (center). They are shown with Mulu Yeneabat (second from left), and Alice Butterfield (second from right).



GSCP's community leaders

ABCD and FBCD recognize that individual strengths and assets orient people toward providing different kinds of leadership at various stages of the community development process. For example, some participants might be more suitably engaged in the initial processes of assessment and planning. Others might be more inclined to lead with regard to matters of organization or structure. Still others might find their assets as leaders suited to operational matters. Some community members might rise up as leaders with respect to certain issues. The many gifts and assets in a community yield many different styles and inclinations toward leadership.

Although many children attended meetings and participated in the drama activities, several children and youth stood out consistently as best able to represent and bring out the views of other children and youth during discussions. Using drama as a medium through which youth could express their ideas, feelings, and viewpoints enabled some to project their strengths on stage in roles they had helped to construct. A few of the children who were most active in leading discussions about their own assets were also most able to participate vocally in training sessions that also involved adults from the project's Core Group.

Other leadership roles taken by community residents were in the context of their committees, especially those involving garbage collectors and car washers associations. One or two members from each association that participated in assessment and planning meetings carried most of the conversation. This pattern held at all levels of the project: a few individuals lead most consistently and others participate sincerely, but in relatively quiet and somewhat passive roles.

ABCD from the Bottom Up and Inside Out

ABCD is an expressly inside-out and bottom-up approach to community development. It argues that formal organizations and entities outside of the community must "take a step back" in order

to create space in the community for individuals and associations to recognize their strengths and utilize their assets positively. Somewhat differently, FBCD requires inside and outside forces working together since each level of the community - formal and informal - must support the roles necessary for families to employ their productive capacities.

To what extent did the outside entities – NGOs, universities, and government – take the steps back in support of the individual, family, and association capacities? If they did step back, did they remain engaged from the right distance in order to support initiatives desired by the community? Moreover, did they offer their expertise, resources, and power to create a context for the successful enactment of community projects as well as the creation of a viable partnership structure?

The Love for Children Organization was the grantee and NGO base for the project. Love for Children has a history of working in Addis Ababa communities with methods that respect and build up the productive capacities of individuals and families. The Project Coordinator was an employee of Love for Children and was well supported by management. This local NGO demonstrated the right balance between stepping back to enable individuals and families to use their assets and stepping forward to offer them training and support so that they could, primarily through the project staff, articulate and organize those assets into promising projects. This holds true especially with respect to children and youth.



From left: Richelle Haines, Alice Butterfield, and community member with Lemlem Tukuye, Executive Director of The Love For Children Organization.

One difficulty that was not resolved for some time, and reflected a gap in support among the various NGOs, schools, and government offices, was the vexing and frustrating problem of finding a stable and suitable office for the GSCP. This problem continued throughout the first two years of the GSCP. Neither the schools, nor the *Kebele* or NGOs were able to find a way to secure a decent office space permanently. This hampered the efficiency of the project, and for a time it understandably drained the morale of the GSCP members and project staff. The case of the office reflects a gap in trust among the various organization partners of the GSCP. Administrators of the public elementary school that was originally to provide office space apparently feared that the project would ultimately take school property away from them. The instability of the office situation demonstrates a problem that can be endemic in partnerships involving the community and multiple organizations. A decision-making vacuum can emerge in which no organization is willing or able to step forward and make its structure available on a reliable basis. The continuing absence of an office reflected a weakness in the partnership structure as well as in the relationships among the NGO and government partners.

With respect to the university, the original intensive involvement of graduate students diminished over time to the extent that only one or two PhD students and MSW students in field placements or action research maintained active roles. As noted previously, good quality research by AAU students and faculty was produced, but the type of ongoing and closely engaged action research process identified in the first year of the project did not realize its full potential. The decreasing absence of graduate students from community meetings was noted by community residents, and was interpreted by the community as a weakening of the role of Addis Ababa University in the Partnership.

With respect to the government, after the first two years of the GSCP, the ongoing presence of officials at many functions was compromised by the regular turnover that occurred. As is common in such projects, some *Kebele 03/09* officials were more actively involved than others were. As part of its general operations, the *Kebele* had already provided important logistical support for the associations most active in the project. The garbage collectors associations and the car washers association depend on the local government for their space, and in the case of the former, their permit to haul trash during designated times every week. They depend on the space that the government provides for their equipment. The associations have also received training from the local government in various kinds of business and accounting practices. In this respect, there was already a partnership operating between individuals, families, associations and government, and it enabled young men and families to utilize their assets to be productive and generate income. Whereas the local government has been supportive of the associations noted above, the Ministry responsible for certifying new associations delayed approval for a frustrating period of months before granting the community partnership its official status. This led some community members, such as those on the Family Committee, to delay their activities substantially.

What do the above examples illustrate about the inside-out or outside-in approaches for the GSCP? The project has achieved a healthy balance between the inside-out and outside-in approaches. Community participants stressed their appreciation the uniqueness of the project in that it truly began with their assets and their aspirations. One heard references repeatedly to the way in which the Partnership was different from previous efforts in the community that were led by NGOs. This affirmation from the people themselves provides good evidence that the inside-out aspect of the project has been implemented credibly.

Yet, there are important outside-in dimensions of the project. The university professors and students, Love for Children Organization, and even the Oak Foundation, the project's funder, represent outside entities partly responsible for initiating the process of organizing, training, and research. Other groups with particular expertise and assets – the Candle Theatre Training Center, for example – are highly valued by children and adults participating in the project. Trainers from the University of Illinois at Chicago provided the orientations to ABCD and FBCD, and these were well received and appreciated.

Thus, one of the important successes of the GSCP was the balance it struck between inside and outside entities. The outside organizations first needed to step back in order to create the space for residents to inventory their assets, set the terms in the bylaws for the partnership's structure,

and identify “low hanging fruit” – modest and feasible projects with which to begin. Yet, from their appropriate distance, the outside entities stepped forward to provide valuable training, access to facilities, funding, and other resources to help individuals and families act on their goals.

Integrating ABCD and FBCD in Community Development

ABCD is a mature model in international community development, with an already established body of research that is still expanding. FBCD is a new approach, but grows out of an analysis of the forces that weaken families, and is similar in perspective to ABCD’s critique of the disabling effects of formal services on individuals. The ABCD and FBCD approaches were very amenable to integration in the planning of the GSCP structure and its “low hanging fruit” projects. One easy point for integrating the two models was seen in the training sessions in which the family was inserted into the ABCD perspective of the layers of the community. Families fit logically in the scheme between individuals and associations. FBCD recognizes that families cannot solve all of the community’s problems. It holds, however, that families must be part of the solution to many types of problems.

As noted above, ABCD is more of an inside-out model than FBCD. However, when one examines in ABCD literature, the examples that are used to describe successful community projects inevitably involve residents working somehow in partnership with formal organizations, schools, enterprises, and government, some of which exist within and others outside the community’s geographic boundaries. Moreover, the university and institute trainers who promote ABCD in localities usually enter into them from the outside. Therefore, in practice, ABCD and FBCD seem to be more similar than might be originally apparent with respect to the emphasis on the inside-outside balance. In short, the two approaches are very compatible and amenable to integration. This integration represents one of the important examples of learning that has resulted from the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership that can be disseminated to community development efforts in other communities in Ethiopia as well as those in other developing countries.

Community Change through Children

The project’s most striking success in fostering positive change has been through the committees involving children. With support from parents, but with leadership through the young people themselves, very active and well-attended planning meetings were held for the purposes of identifying assets, issues, and projects. Two cohorts of children completed drama training, which included the production of more than 12 short and medium length plays in which children act out stories that portray the dilemmas they face. Real situations in the community with respect to safety, healthy living practices, child protection, HIV/AIDS, poor parenting practices and other concerns were depicted in these theatrical performances.

During the second round of theatre and drama training, 450 persons, including many parents, came to watch the graduation ceremony and performance. The GSCP has indeed demonstrated that children care about their communities and want to change themselves and their community for the better. They can be self-critical and assertive about what they see as causes of the difficulties that they experience. They can speak up articulately in meetings with their peers and adults. In addition, with good support from adults and a structure such as that provided in the GSCP, they take innovative actions that unveil some of their underappreciated assets and use them to address important community concerns.



Parents enjoy a performance of the Gedam Sefer Children's Theatre Group

How does community change occur through children? ABCD with children in Gedam Sefer created a process that enabled children to identify what they cared about, and allowed them to speak out. Parents in Gedam Sefer care about the welfare and future of their children. This fact alone brought caring individuals, parents and children together. The principle of ABCD applies: Positive community change takes place when just a few people *care enough to act*. In Gedam Sefer, children were the catalysts of community change. Adult leaders followed when they realized that children were the most important asset of Gedam Sefer.

Conclusion

The above lessons pertaining to partnerships, ABCD, FBCD, the capacities of children, and other issues illustrate how the emphasis on learning that a community partnership brings to development can help all participants assume comfortably shared roles as students and scholars. The lessons learned in the GSCP challenge the sharp distinctions between theory and practice that occurs when universities and communities work separately. Rather, what occurs is “theory in motion,” being tested, refined, and applied to practical situations in which a healthy leveling takes place between academics and community participants.

Chapter 8. Principles of Practice

The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership has considerable experiences and important lessons to share. Some of the lessons from the three-year experience of practicing an integrated ABCD and FBCD model to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable children and families are as follows:

- ***Follow the footsteps of the community members:*** Building relationships with and among community members is a foundation for motivating and encouraging their efforts. The main motto is to bring people together and create a common platform for forging a partnership. The process is transparent and the agendas are open-ended to let the community members raise issues, take initiative, and lead the direction of their community development. The process is slow. Time is needed to allow community members to buy in to the ABCD principles and take ownership of their community's problems and strengths. Partnership members must be willing to push the process forward.
- ***Use community members as facilitators:*** Except during training sessions, community elders and the children are the facilitators of dialogue and community conversation. The children's role as facilitators and presenters motivated more community members to be engaged in the Partnership activities.
- ***Improve the skills and capacities of community members:*** Encouraging the development of community member's and children's skills and capacity is a priority. The process involves the social workers, graduate students, and community members on an equal footing. Children and community members are encouraged to comment and discuss their concerns in the way that they perceive them. Based on this:
 - The GSCP facilitated skills training for eight adult community members on Urban Community Development for five months. This improved the commitment and attitude of the members toward their own future and their contributions to the Partnership.
 - Based on the request of the children, the GSCP facilitated basic skills training on theatre and drama acting for a total of 8 months in two rounds. In a positive way, this changed the situation of children labeled as troublemakers in their own neighborhoods. If children are supported properly, they can bring about a difference with a minimum of adult or professional input.
- ***Listen patiently:*** Listening patiently was the ground rule for all community discussions. Children even made this a priority during their conversation activities. When different groups conduct discussions, community members and children together are given equal opportunity to voice whatever their feelings and points of view. This builds confidence by recognizing everyone's ideas.
- ***Remember the value of visible results:*** The GSCP is fortunate that the children's ideas were realistic. The availability of volunteers for the children's Summer Learning Program

and the supply of 5,000 books to libraries and schools within the community built morale and gave courage to the Partnership members. Such early results helped the Partnership members look forward, have hope, and want to realize their vision and goals.

- ***Respect the community's experiences:*** Community members have an intimate knowledge of their community. Once they are convinced about the advantages of identifying their assets and strengths, it makes it easy to find solutions. Community members can also look to the local government and the appropriate traditional or cultural ways of handling different issues and concerns. Even though the Gedam Sefer neighborhood is destitute and has many problems, community residents know that which is feasible and what type of short-lived programs and services they require. In the midst of all the problems they face in their daily efforts for survival, they prioritized the issues related to their children's life skills and their attainment of knowledge.
- ***Affirm the children's future:*** - The GSCP demonstrates that parents and community leaders are most concerned about the future of their children. The Partnership moved forward, even in difficult times, because of the activities and actions of the children's theatre and drama club. The many different short plays composed by the children also improved the wellbeing of children, which in turn, positively affected families and the community at large.
- ***Honor and recognize the positive, productive capacities of families*** – Families are seldom singled out for the good things they do. Yet, families of many forms already give in many ways to their members, neighbors, and their community overall. Moral guidance, personal care, assistance in the resolution of disputes, goods and services of many types, and other things enhance the quality of life. Families are often overlooked when identifying the productive and creative forces in the community. Worse, an exclusive focus on family problems and harmful behaviors can lead to a deficit-based, rather than asset-based, stance toward families and development.

Such practice guidelines can apply to what professional community developers and researchers do, as well as to the actions and methods of community leaders. These principles, along with the many training modules built through the duration of this project, can be expanded upon to create comprehensive curricula in community development practice that further promote family stabilization and promote positive outcomes for child welfare.

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