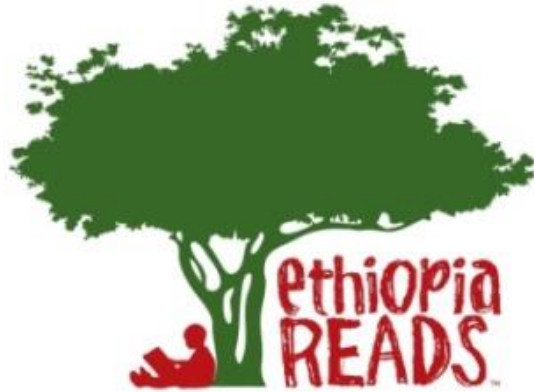


ANNUAL REPORT 2024



ETHIOPIA READS



Ethiopia Reads
Annual Projects Report
2024

January, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia Reads(ER) is a registered organization under the Civil Society Organization with a license number 1415. ER is aiming to enhance the reading habit of children in Ethiopia. It has impacted many children in all regions through reading and literacy. ER has established more than 70 libraries spanning every region of the country, shipping more than a quarter million books and serving over 130,000 children per year. ER supplies books, library furniture, and critical librarian training, mentoring and networking to library staff – most of who work in school-based environments.

The most effective literacy campaign works across a broad front. ER has been very successful in diversifying its methods over the years. With over a decade of experience on the ground, ER has developed a full spectrum of literacy-centered activities and services: access to books and language appropriate materials; more than 500,000 copies of over 47 attractive titles books were distributed for more than 400 libraries in ten local languages; access to classrooms and libraries; professional training and mentorship; advocacy for book-centered learning and good reading practices; involved in emergency responses on literacy; encouraging local writers; outreach into the most marginalized communities, both rural and urban; and family literacy and literacy awareness campaigns.

Ethiopia reads has a unique mobile library program called “Horse Powered Literacy” project in remote areas of Ethiopia. It gives reading service to children who have no access to schools or books with the support of horses and trained facilitators by going into villages in deep rural areas. ER also print and distribute children’s story books in different local languages for schools and runs children’s library in Addis Ababa and Hawassa city to serve the community by creating convenient place and resources.

Vision

To see all children in Ethiopia having the opportunity to grow up physically and emotionally and having a strong sense and self-esteem through reading.

Mission

To create a culture of reading in Ethiopia by facilitating and establishing libraries to Ethiopian children, support libraries, train librarians and educators.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024

I. Gebeta Children's Community Library Program

Gebeta Children's Community Library stands as a cornerstone of learning and creativity for children from nearby schools and neighborhoods. Operating Monday to Friday from 9:30 AM to 6:00 PM, the library offers a welcoming environment where young minds can explore, learn, and grow.

The library's weekly activities are designed to captivate and inspire. These include read-aloud sessions that bring stories to life, reading competitions that spark friendly challenges, silent reading for focused learning, and tutoring to support academic success. Additionally, children engage in creative arts such as drawing, book-making, and singing, making the library a hub of both educational and recreational activities.

Weekday afternoons are lively with activity as children visit after school, while Saturdays see an even greater turnout, with many taking advantage of the library's resources for homework, reading, and fun. Throughout the year, the library hosted numerous events and programs, fostering active participation and a love for reading among its young visitors.

A significant milestone in 2024 was the introduction of a Membership Form and lending practice for parents. This trend was met with overwhelming interest, with all parents signing up for the program, which will officially launch in 2025. By the end of the year, the library had welcomed a total of 373 children, ensuring its vital role in the community as a center for literacy, creativity, and growth.

Major Highlights of the Library throughout year



Reading festivals and exhibition

Gebeta participated in a highly attended festival organized by the Addis Ababa Culture and Tourism Office to promote the love of reading.

The event saw active involvement from all eleven sub-cities of Addis Ababa and attracted a diverse group of attendees, including students, colleges, bookstores, writers, artists, and representatives from the House of Peoples' Representatives parliament. A highlight of the festival was the visit of Ms. Hirut Kassaw, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, who commended and encouraged the impactful work of Ethiopia Reads. This event served as a testament to Gebeta's dedication to nurturing a passion for reading in students and its significant role in shaping the cultural and educational fabric of Addis Ababa.

Gebeta also participated in an exhibition organized by the National Library and Archives, where they showcased the “*Ready Set Go*” books, printed in 10 different local languages covering a wide range of topics. During the event, Ethiopia Reads was honored with visits from the Minister for Culture and Sport, Honorable Mr. Kejela Merdasa, as well as Mr. Amin Abdulkadir, the Advisor for the Ethiopian Ambassador to Canada. Both expressed strong support for the valuable work being done by Ethiopia Reads, highlighting the organization's dedication to promoting reading and education across Ethiopia.

Family literacy events

Throughout the year, two family literacy programs were successfully held with the goal of empowering parents with valuable tools and knowledge to support their children's learning and development. These programs focused on providing parents with comprehensive parenting training, equipping them with effective strategies to engage their children in reading, and introducing them to the newly designed library membership form and connecting them to the library's resources.

The Child Development Network Team , a group of professional volunteers in child development, facilitated a training session for parents, delving into crucial aspects of child upbringing. The training highlighted the transformative role that books and reading



play in a child's development, offering practical strategies to make reading more engaging and enjoyable for children. These strategies included ways to incorporate reading into daily routines, how to select age-appropriate books, and techniques to encourage children's enthusiasm for reading.

Both programs were highly interactive, creating an open and engaging environment for parents to share their experiences and learn from one another. A total of 17 parents participated in each event, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They expressed deep appreciation for the valuable insights shared and showed keen interest in the topics discussed, eager to apply the new knowledge to foster a love for reading in their children. The success of these programs ensured the importance of parental involvement in nurturing children's educational growth and further strengthened the connection between families and the library's mission.

This document and its content
belongs to Ethiopia Reads.

Celebration of graduation

Gebeta Library also celebrated the accomplishments of its young learners, particularly those from kindergarten who were preparing to transition into primary school. To mark this significant milestone, Gebeta hosted a heartfelt graduation ceremony for 12 graduates, 5 boys and 7 girls. The ceremony was a joyous occasion, attended by the graduates' parents, friends, and fellow children from the library.



The event was thoughtfully organized to honor the hard work and dedication of the children, highlighting their achievements as they took this important step in their educational journey. The ceremony was met with widespread

appreciation, with attendees expressing gratitude for how the day was celebrated in such a memorable and meaningful way. It was a beautiful reflection of the library's commitment to fostering a love for learning and recognizing the milestones in the lives of its young readers.

Gebeta's Guest



Gebeta Library hosted a special guest from the Traffic Management Agency, invited to educate children on the importance of road safety. This visit was particularly timely, as many of the children would be traveling to school during the time, some accompanied by

friends, others traveling alone, and would need to navigate busy roads.

The guest read from a book specially designed to teach young readers about essential road safety rules. The session focused on critical topics such as the meanings of traffic lights, the significance of zebra crossings, and the dos and don'ts of crossing roads safely. The children were actively engaged in the discussion, learning valuable lessons on how to stay safe while walking to school. The representative from the Traffic Management Agency emphasized the importance of being cautious and mindful when crossing roads, ensuring that the children were well-trained and reminded to always take extra care in their daily travels. The session was not only educational but also an important reminder of the library's role in promoting the safety and well-being of its young readers.

Christmas celebration



Gebeta Library hosted a lively and festive Christmas program, bringing together children to celebrate the holiday season with their friends through a variety of fun and engaging activities. The program included read-aloud sessions, poetry performances, music, drama,

and exciting games, creating a cheerful and interactive atmosphere for everyone involved.

One of the highlights of the celebration was the recognition of the Best Library Users of the Year. Three outstanding young readers were honored for their dedication and commitment

to reading throughout the year, receiving awards for their efforts. The entire event was filled with joy and excitement, confirming the library's role in fostering a love for reading and creating a sense of community among young learners. It was a memorable occasion that not only celebrated the holiday spirit but also the achievements of the children who have shown exceptional interest for learning.

Summer camp program

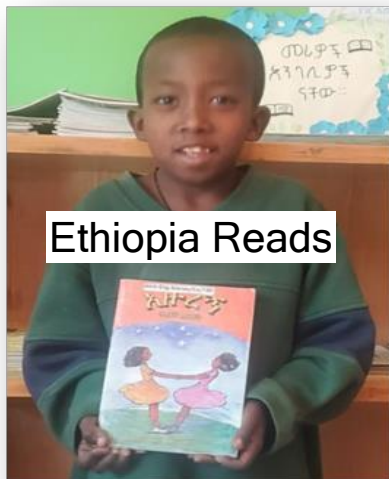
Summer camp program of 2024 had begun its journey by collecting and orienting volunteers about ER and the program. It had seen a dynamic start with 36 dedicated volunteers (28 female, 8 male) most of whom are university students as well as fresh graduate medical doctors and 81 enthusiastic children (41 female, 40 male) who engaged in a mix of educational and recreational activities. The program facilitated effective tutoring and targeted activities by dividing children into six distinct groups based on their class/grade levels. This aimed to tailor educational content and activities to the appropriate age and skill levels of the children.

Volunteers and staff conducted read-aloud sessions, group discussions, and interactive tutorials. In addition to educational activities, recreational activities such as games and arts and crafts which provided a balanced approach that keeps children engaged and excited about their learning experience. Similar as the beginning, the closing ceremony was a heartwarming event attended by many parents and their children who truly embodied the spirit of the summer camp. After the completion of the camp program volunteers were trained (by a lecturer from Addis Ababa University) for a half-day session titled "Personality Development" which focused on the process of self-improvement for meaningful change. Here under is a pictorial presentation of the activities.



Memorable visitors of the year

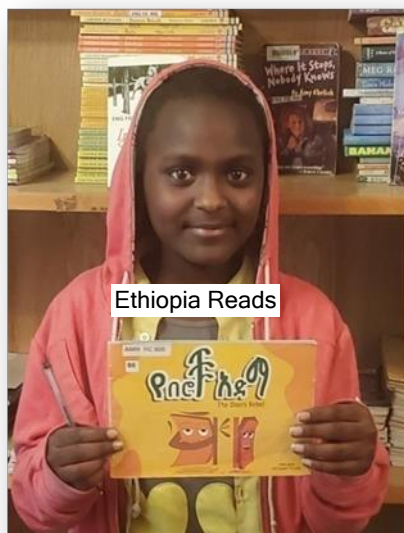
Yonas Seale (4th grader, age 12)



"I really enjoy visiting Gebeta Library. It's a great place for me to read and study, and it makes my formal education much easier since I can spend my free time here studying. I also get to meet up with my six new friends. Unfortunately, I'll be moving soon to live with my father in a rural area, where there is no school available due to the ongoing conflict. I'll have to rely on my exercise books and the knowledge I've gained from the library. I will truly miss my friends and Gebeta. Looking ahead, I hope Gebeta expands to reach more children, opens in more locations, and grows into a much larger library."

This document and its content belongs to Ethiopia Reads

Hamuna Muse (5th grader, age 11)



"The reason my mom brought me to the library is because she has friends whose children study at Gebeta Library, and they are always among the top students in their class. Inspired by them, I also started getting better grades, and my mom is always happy she brought me here. My friends also visit the library. What I enjoy the most are the various activities, especially drama, which I love to participate in. I hope Gebeta can reach more children, especially those who don't have access to school. "Gebeta is a place where we learn in a fun way, and we really love it"

II. Hawassa Reading Center (HRC)

HRC has proudly served the residents of Hawassa for over a decade, offering quality services and fostering a culture of learning and growth. Operating from Monday to Saturday, the center provides a welcoming space for reading, tutoring, and personal development, making it a vital resource for the community and a remarkable opportunity for families to engage in educational activities.

The library hosts a variety of interactive and engaging programs, including read-aloud sessions, tutoring, art activities, and special celebrations, all designed to inspire children and nurture their love for learning. These efforts have been widely appreciated by both children and parents, contributing to the reading center growing popularity and strong support from the local community and the Hawassa city administration.

In the past year alone, the library welcomed and served 949 children and youths, demonstrating its impact and continued commitment to enriching the lives of young learners.

This document and its content
belongs to Ethiopia Reads.

Highlights of the year in HRC

Reading Events

HRC participated in a reading festival organized by the National Archives and Library Service (NALS) in Dilla Town. The event brought together a diverse group of book retailers, sellers, and institutions. A highlight of the festival was the children's reading tent, organized by Dilla University and ER, which provided a vibrant and engaging space for young readers. This memorable and enjoyable initiative successfully inspired children to connect with books and fostered a love for reading.



Additionally, HRC took part in another festival, hosted by NALA in Arbaminch City during January. The lively event was held in the heart of the city, drawing a large audience of residents, tourists, and students. This collaborative festival featured contributions from NALA, ER, local writers, bookstores, Arbaminch University, and Correctional Centers. The dynamic program showcased the importance of reading and literature, creating a truly enriching experience for all who attended.

This document and its content
belongs to Ethiopia Reads.

Summer camp program

Hawassa Reading Center hosted the 2024 summer camp program, welcoming a total of 54 children (21 girls and 33 boys), along with 2 volunteers and 5 staff members. The program offered both tutorial sessions and engaging activities, such as drawing and music. The primary subjects covered were English, Science, Math, and Amharic, with classes held three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday).



Moreover, 15 children excitedly participated in the drawing class, which was offered five days a week for 2 hours each day. Led by a dedicated HRC staff member, the class covered a wide range of art skills, including sketching, shading, coloring, and painting.

The program concluded with a fun and entertaining closing event that the children thoroughly enjoyed. Many expressed excitement and anticipation for the next summer camp program, making it a memorable experience for everyone involved.

Christmas celebration

A vibrant and festive Christmas celebration was held at Hawassa Reading Center, brimming with joy and excitement. The event featured a variety of engaging activities, including songs, read-aloud sessions, games, and question-and-answer sessions that delighted the children. Volunteers from Hawassa University joined HRC staff in creating a warm and cheerful atmosphere, sharing in the laughter and festive spirit of the children.



Meeting with parents

This year, a special session was organized with parents to discuss the vital role of the reading center, highlighting the importance of reading and strategies to make it more appealing to children. A guest trainer from Hawassa Teachers Training College (TTC) conducted an insightful session for 21 parents.

Parents found the training highly valuable and refreshing, recognizing the profound impact it has had on their children's learning. Many expressed heartfelt gratitude to HRC, sharing



how they have observed positive changes in their children since they began visiting the library.

Librarian Training/Discussion

HRC organized an engaging training and discussion session on the *Psychology of Childhood* and *Early Childhood Care and Education*, tailored for school administrators, teachers, and librarians. The event brought together 32 participants from ER network schools, offering them valuable insights into child development, behavioral patterns, and effective strategies for fostering children's emotional and intellectual growth.

The session was led by dedicated volunteers, graduate students from Hawassa University, who were supported by HRC staff. This collaborative effort ensured a practical and enriching experience, equipping participants with the tools to better nurture and support young learners.



Memorable visitors of the year

Rahmet Reshid

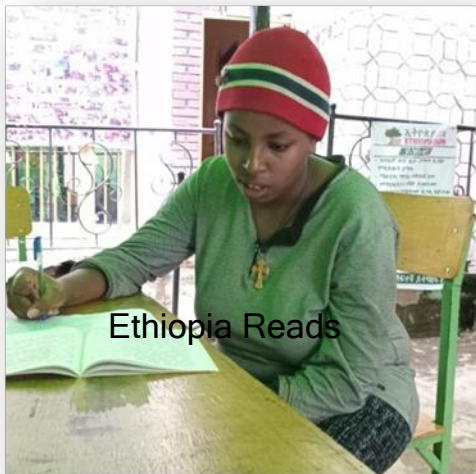


Rahmet Reshid a 10 year old female who is a 4th grader. She has been coming to HRC before she joined school; her brother also visits HR, which helped her to frequently visit along with her brother. Rahmet lives with her 1 brother and 1 sister along with their parents who makes a living working as daily laborers, all children help their parents after school in the day to day routine. Their parents are very much happy

with their children involving in various activities of HRC.

Rahmet proudly speaks *“starting from kindergarten until now I always get the 1st rank in my class, I believe HRC is the reason for my grades, I get all the books I want from the library and everyone helps me when I have questions, I am a brave student because I have HRC to help me out. In the future I want to become a doctor, Thank you so much for everything you have been doing for me”.*

Rosa Teshita



Rosa is a grade 10 student of age 15. She explained *“I started coming to HRC when I was in 4th grade. Before that, I didn’t have the habit of reading. But being able to join HRC and coming consistently has transformed me into someone who loves reading and focuses more on my education. I even scored 95% on my 8th-grade national exam. HRC has also been a great relief for many parents, especially these days when children are at risk of falling into addiction. Having the library around has helped protect children from engaging in such*

behaviors. In the future, I hope to see HRC expand to different areas of Hawassa, helping more children and contributing to their success. In short, I want to say, we are deeply grateful to HRC.”

DML (Ethiopia Tikdem School)

The Donkey Mobile Library (DML), based at Ethiopia Tikdem School, has made significant strides over the years, serving both in-school children and the wider community. Operating three days a week, the library reaches beyond the school by rotating through various locations, ensuring children in different areas have access to its valuable resources and services.

DML has been instrumental in providing reading materials and inspiring a love for learning among children. Through engaging activities like read-aloud sessions, studying, tutoring, singing, question-and-answer games, and other fun initiatives, the program effectively motivates young readers and nurtures their curiosity.

The community has recognized and appreciated DML's efforts, with teachers, parents, and local members sharing positive feedback. Their support has encouraged the program to continue its mission of fostering a love for reading, both within schools and in the community.

In 2024 alone, DML reached total of 2,453 children, comprising 1,692 in-school children and 761 out-of-school(communitiy) children.

Memorable users of the year

Hanna Yohannes

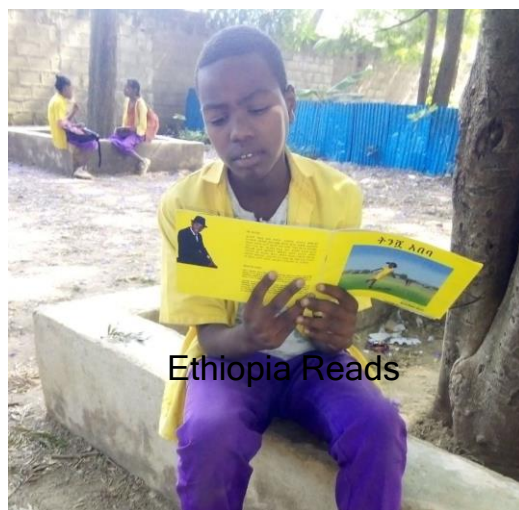


*"My name is Hana, and I am a grade 5 student. I live with my parents, who work as daily laborers. I really love reading, and in the future, I want to become a doctor to save people's lives. At my school, there isn't enough space in the library for all of us to read. Thanks to DML, I now have a comfortable place where I can read. I truly appreciate having access to so many great and famous storybooks. I would like to say, **"Thank you for giving us DML!"**"*

Minase Ayele

Minase Ayele is a 12-year-old Grade 4 student, who lives with his two brothers, one sister and parents (who earn a living through daily labor) Minase is passionate about education and reading, expressing his thoughts eloquently:

"I love going to school and reading. Without education and reading, our life is dark. That's why everyone should start learning from childhood to change their



lives and their parents' lives. I enjoy reading before and after school, which has helped me improve significantly since I first started visiting this library. What I really love about DML is that I can find all the books I want. I'm grateful that DML is close to me and my friends."

Minase's dedication and perspective highlight the transformative role of the library in his personal growth and education and He serves as an inspiration for his peers.

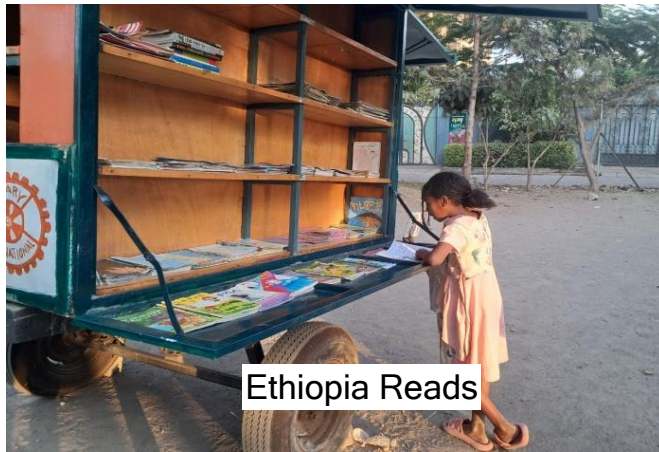
[Donkey Mobile Library /DML/ Tikae School](#)

With a funding from Rotary Club of NC Hickory and the Rotary Club of Addis Ababa Central Mella this DML project commenced on the site of Hiteta area of Hawassa city. It aims to provide access to books and foster reading habit among both children who are not enrolled in school and in school who have limited or no reading skill. The program tackles challenges related to reading and extracurricular activities. It continues to be a great support for teachers and students providing a source of academic reference books, great story books, tutoring activities, reading sessions, reading festival and fun activities in Tikae School. Similar activities have been carried out outside school going around to different neighborhoods.

The program officially launched on March 15/2024 at Tikae school with the presence of members of school as well as representatives from the city education office, students and the community. After the launch it started operating from Monday to Saturday providing reading services three days a week in school and three days in the nearby community for children of the area. The library holds a collection of resources such as; story books, academic references and dictionaries. It gives a well rounded quality service attracting children by including fun activities encouraging reading and strength their educational experience. this year the German media broadcaster named Deutche Welle (DW) had visited DML and filmed a documentary about the service and its impact on the children in Alamura area, Hawassa. On 2024 a total of 2,301 children used the library.

Memorable users of the year

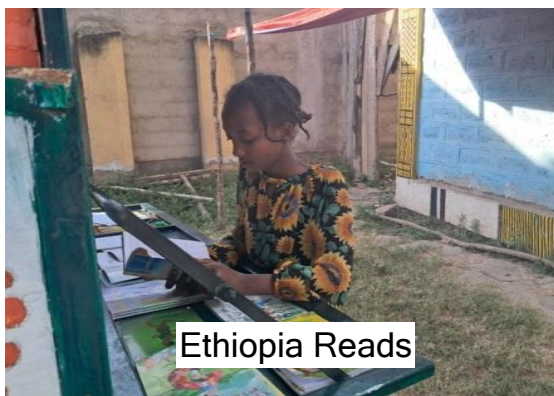
Selam Samuel



Selam Samuel, a 10-year-old grade 4 student who lives with her parents and has 3 brothers and 1 sister. In her free time, she enjoys participating in church choreography. Selam dreams of becoming a doctor one day, driven by her passion for helping people in need of care. She is one of the most consistent

visitors to DML, coming every day to read and enjoy the library's offerings. Selam enjoys reading educational books and singing songs. When studying, she prefers quiet areas to help her focus. Her father is always there to support her, and her teachers provide further guidance when needed. Additionally, Selam loves tutoring her younger siblings with their homework and assignments, demonstrating her caring and responsible nature.

Belete Tinsae



This document and its content belongs to Ethiopia Reads.

Tinsae Belete is a 13-year-old Grade 6 student at Tique Primary School, is an inspiring example of determination and resilience. As the eldest of three siblings, Tinsae lives with her aunt in town while her parents remain in a remote countryside without school access. In addition to helping her family with chores and taking care of

the household, Tinsae balances her time between studying, playing with friends, and pursuing her creative interests. A regular and consistent visitor to DML, she particularly enjoys using reference books to aid her studies and exploring storybooks and educational materials in her downtime.

This year Tinsae is preparing for her Grade 6 regional examinations, carefully managing her study time while maintaining her hobbies, which include drawing, writing spiritual

songs, crafting poems, and exploring literature. Her immediate goals are to excel academically, support her friends with poor academic performance, and grow spiritually.

Looking ahead, Tinsae dreams of becoming a renowned artist, not just in drawing but also in writing articles, books, and poems. Her dedication, creativity, and passion make her a role model for her peers and a bright star in the DML users of the area.

Horse Powered Literacy (HPL)

The HPL program is one of ER's most unique and important programs, operating in the southern part of the country in villages of Ferzano, Tunto, and Kololo. These sites serve children five days a week (Monday to Friday) from 8:00 to 10:00 A.M., offering a half-day session. Children engage in a variety of activities, including learning to differentiate and read the alphabet, writing, singing songs, studying, and reading storybooks aloud.

A common challenge in these areas is that children often do not start school until the age of 10. Parents are hesitant to send their young children to schools far from home, requiring hours of travel. The presence of HPL in these communities has been transformative, providing children with the opportunity to learn to read and write within their local area.

This document and its content
belongs to Ethiopia Reads.

This year, when schools were temporarily closed due to financial constraints, the HPL program became an invaluable resource for children who were unable to attend school. It offered them access to books and learning materials, allowing them to spend their days engaged in education despite the closures. Many children relied on HPL as their primary educational resource, using the available reference books to collaborate and support each other's learning.

In 2024, a total of 1,102 children utilized the library across all program sites, highlighting the profound impact HPL continues to have on the lives of young learners in these communities.

Memorable Users of the year

Selamnesh Desalegne

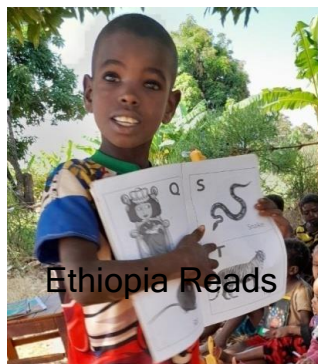
Selamnesh Desalegne is an 8 years old girl who has been an active participant in the HPL program for the past two years. She has 9 siblings (5 male and 4 female), but only two of her older



siblings attend school. Unfortunately, Selamnesh, like the rest of her siblings hasn't been attending school due to concerns about her safety (given the considerable distance between their home and the school) Coping to these challenges, her commitment and engagement with the HPL program proved the transformative impact such initiatives can have on the lives of children like Selamnesh, who are eager to learn and overcome barriers to education.

Selamnesh shared, *"I don't attend school, but I am very fortunate to have the HPL program. It is preparing me for the future. When I start going to school, it will be easy for me since I can identify alphabets, numbers, and can read. It used to make me sad that I don't go to school, but thanks to HPL, I don't feel left out from knowing what schools teach. In the future, I would like to become a teacher and reach children who don't have access to school like me."* Selamnesh's aspirations reflect the impact of educational programs like HPL, instilling hope and ambitions for a brighter future. Selamnesh has been receiving unanimous praise from those who observe her as the most active, eager-to-learn, and highly communicative girl at the site.

Melkamu Feleke



Melkamu feleke is a 10 year old boy who has not yet started school, he has 5 brothers and 3 sisters, where only siblings above the age of 10 joined school, those who didn't join school always visits HPL regularly. Melkamu shared his opinion on the program *"I am excited to start my education in the coming year, what makes me more happy is that because of HPL I can now read and write as a result I don't have to pass through kindergarten. I will directly join*

grade 1! I am grateful for everything HPL did for me, my family and friends! Because of the program we are able to have a school just around the corner without travelling for hours”.

III. ER Book Donation Projects in 2024

This year, ER purchased books through a matching grant initiative with two libraries/schools in Addis Ababa: Tesfa Primary School, one of ER’s network schools, and the Kilinto Condominium Public Library. Both institutions contributed 3,000 ETB each, and ER matched their contributions, enabling the purchase of reference materials and children’s storybooks carefully selected to meet their specific needs and preferences.

Listed below are the rest of book donations to various facilities of schools, woredas, public libraries, vocational schools and correctional centers in Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara and south in 2024.

**This document and its content
belongs to Ethiopia Reads.**

Description	Total no. of books donated	Total no of Schools /libraries received
Imported books	5,611	75 schools, public libraries, A.A culture and tourism bureau and HRC
Reprinted books	1550	13 ER network schools around hawassa, 1 public library in Oromia , Dano woreda , 1 Private school in Addis Ababa
Local book purchased	590	HRC , St gebriel private school ,hawassa, 1 public library in Oromia , Dano woreda ,
RSG books	50	1 primary school, Oromia
TOTAL	7,801 Books	

IV. Completion of WB Storybooks distribution project

This project was designed to support households and children impacted by conflicts in five regions of Ethiopia: Tigray, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Amhara, and Oromia. Funded by the World Bank and the ELP Read@Home Trust Fund, the initiative was launched and largely implemented in 2023 G.C. The primary objectives of this project are to provide

comprehensive support for children, families, and educators in conflict-affected areas of the country. These goals include developing and delivering storybooks to at least 80,000 vulnerable children, equipping at least 26,000 parents and caregivers with technical training to foster a culture of reading at home, and inspiring hope and learning among families. The project also aims to train facilitators and educators to actively promote and monitor children's reading practices at home and in schools, establish book exchange programs to facilitate resource-sharing among families, and meticulously document the implementation process. This includes detailed reporting on the number of beneficiaries, disaggregated by age and gender.

In 2024, the final phase of implementation was completed in the Benishangul Gumuz region. Despite significant security challenges, ER demonstrated exceptional dedication by successfully delivering training and distributing 9,000 books written in Shinasha and Gumuz languages, reaching conflict affected communities.

Additionally, a final supervision and follow-up trip was conducted by teams from Ethiopia Reads (ER) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Mekele and Kombolcha. These visits included discussions with beneficiary caregivers, key informant interviews with facilitators, and meetings with regional and woreda education officials to assess the program's impact and gather feedback.

The final project report was submitted to the World Bank, where the ER team presented and discussed the program's implementation process, highlighting its achievements and challenges. Despite numerous challenges, the project achieved significant success in reaching 26,667 households across five conflict-affected regions. The tailored storybooks and caregiver training sessions have provided crucial educational resources to children, fostering a supportive learning environment at home. This initiative has demonstrated the potential for educational resilience in conflict settings through community engagement and adaptable implementation strategies. The project's success highlights the importance of culturally relevant educational materials and the vital role of caregivers in supporting home-based learning, especially in crisis contexts.

V. The 4th National Annual Children's Reading Summit

The 4th National Annual Children's Reading Summit, themed "Supporting Children in Early Learning," was a landmark event hosted by Ethiopia Reads in 2024, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. Held on April 11–12, 2024, the summit brought together 146 participants, including educators, policymakers, publishers, and international organizations. It featured presentations, experience-sharing sessions, a recognition ceremony, and a book exhibition. Key discussions included ER's achievements, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) results, early childhood language development, and the critical role of high-quality storybooks in fostering a reading culture. The summit also spotlighted initiatives like the Addis Ababa Mayor's Office's ECD programs, the Reading Clinic Project by Dr. Mengistu, and a comprehensive education policy reform by the Ministry of Education to enhance accessibility and inclusivity.

The event also celebrated notable contributors to children's literacy, recognizing individuals, schools, and institutions for their dedication to promoting reading. Highlights included ER's collaboration with the World Bank to distribute storybooks to conflict-affected areas, the presentation of Ethiopian children's book bibliography research, and the innovative "Butterflies" book series. The summit achieved its goals as a premier networking platform for children's literacy, showcasing ER's mission, fostering diverse participation, and generating greater visibility for the cause. Enhanced media coverage and government involvement were notable successes, leaving participants inspired and hopeful for the future of children's literacy in Ethiopia.

VI. ER Commissioned Bibliography Research Launch

Ethiopia Reads undertook a comprehensive research project to compile and document the bibliography research of Ethiopian children's books published over the past 14 years by commissioning it to an independent firm named Iga Communications. The project aims to create a detailed and systematic record of children's literature in Ethiopia, with a focus on capturing the diversity, development, and trends in this vital field.

The research has several key objectives, including highlighting contributions in local languages by emphasizing the importance of publishing children's books in Ethiopian languages to promote local cultures, traditions, and linguistic diversity through storytelling.

It aims to identify and celebrate contributing authors who have significantly advanced children's literature in Ethiopia. Additionally, the project systematically categorizes books based on genre, themes, and target age groups, offering valuable insights into the types of content created for young readers. It also documents the languages used in publishing, capturing multilingual efforts and identifying gaps in representation. By compiling and organizing data on publication years, publishers, and distribution patterns, the research provides a comprehensive resource for future reference and academic study. Furthermore, it analyzes trends over a 14-year timeline, identifying patterns, growth areas, and challenges in Ethiopian children's literature, thereby offering critical insights for stakeholders and policymakers.

The research was launched and presented during the 4th annual Children Reading Summit and widely praised for its potential to enhance the visibility and accessibility of Ethiopian children's books. It serves as a foundational resource for writers, educators, publishers, and researchers, promoting informed decisions and targeted investments in children's literacy. By spotlighting the rich literary heritage of Ethiopia and its potential for growth, the project aims to inspire future documentation, foster collaboration, and strengthen the culture of reading among Ethiopian children.

VII. Partnering for Production of Storybooks and Digital Application with iCog Lab

One of the most noteworthy initiatives undertaken by Ethiopia Reads in 2024 was its collaboration with iCog Lab a Digital Group to produce five storybook titles in digital format for children under the age of eight. These storybooks were made accessible in four languages: Tigrinya, Afaan Oromo, Somali, and Amharic, reflecting ER's commitment to promoting linguistic diversity and inclusivity.

ER's role in this collaboration was pivotal, starting with the creation of engaging content by four ER-trained local writers under the guidance of Elizabeth Taylor, an expert in children's literature. The stories were then translated into the target languages with the support of local translators and regional education office experts to ensure cultural and linguistic accuracy. Two skilled illustrators, selected based on ER's recommendations, contributed vibrant pictures to enhance the storytelling experience. iCog Digital Group then took charge

of developing the overall digital content, ensuring that the books were accessible and engaging for young readers.

The project has now been successfully completed, and the storybooks are available online for digital use. This initiative not only expands the availability of quality digital reading materials for children in Ethiopia but also exemplifies the power of collaboration in fostering literacy and education in a multilingual context.

VIII. Storybooks development and distribution project for MOF 3R-4-CACE Project

Recognized by the World Bank Group for its outstanding achievements in a previous project for conflict-affected children, Ethiopia Reads (ER) was entrusted with a new initiative in partnership with the FDRE Ministry of Finance (MOF). Under this contract, ER committed to designing and printing 135,120 bilingual storybooks within a five-month project timeline to support five conflict-affected regions. The primary objective of this project is to provide culturally and linguistically relevant children's books in their mother tongues, along with supplementary materials, to help mitigate learning loss and enhance access to reading resources in the languages children use at school.

Key goals of the project include designing, developing, and delivering storybooks to 1,126 schools across the targeted regions, training educators to incorporate these books into reading activities such as read-aloud sessions, and thoroughly documenting and reporting the implementation process and outcomes.

A major part of the milestones has already been achieved, with the production, approval, printing, and delivery of the storybooks to the Ministry of Finance completed within 2024. The remaining activities, including conducting Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions for education supervisors in the targeted areas, monitoring and documentation visits to selected schools that received the books, and preparing the final project completion report, are set to be finalized soon through February 2025.

IX. Summary of other activities implemented by ER in 2024

- Writers Workshop - A successful advanced writer's workshop took place at Gebeta library which was led by Elizabeth Taylor during the program a total of 14 writers enthusiastically participated.
- Ethiopia Reads and the Embassy of France had signed a partnership agreement aimed at achieving several common objectives of developing the quality of teaching and learning languages in Ethiopia, Promoting multilingualism through books and fostering a love for reading among the youth. The agreement outlines specific areas of commitment from both parties. Thenwards communication and discusiion has been made with the newly assigned coordinator for education to the Embassy and agreed to collaborate well in some projects for 2025 G.C.
- ER collaborated with HOHE award to celebrate the 100th year celebration of the first Ethiopian story book by the title "Love angels for Ethiopian kids" written by Bilata Bekele Habtemariam in 1916 E.C. The program was held in the national library and archive agency with attendance of various guests.
- Ethiopia Reads was actively involved and assisted the *Raey* school library formation in various aspects including making the design of the library furniture, providing training for the school librarian, donating books, and providing valuable consultation on the overall management and activities of the library.
- A **National Reading Network (NRN)** has been established, bringing together 12 member organizations and libraries, with the Ministry of Education leading the initiative. Ethiopia Reads (ER) proudly participates as both a founding member and an active contributor to the management and technical teams. The primary focus of this network is to design and develop a national reading policy framework and advocate for its adoption and implementation by the government.

The technical and management teams have dedicated considerable time and expertise to ensure the successful creation of this framework. Currently, assessment tools have been developed for an upcoming assessment trip, aimed at gathering critical data to inform the framework document.

- A new condominium library was inaugurated at Kilinto Condominium with the support of Ethiopia Reads, which provided a matching grant and book donations, alongside contributions from the National Library and Archive and the local condominium community. This library will serve the 208 homes in the compound, benefiting approximately 256 children.
- The ER team has held several discussions with the personnel at the **Addis Ababa Mayor's Office** regarding their **ECD initiative** to explore potential areas for collaboration. So far, ER has been providing consultation on various aspects of the initiative, including designing an improved "**Read to a Child**" campaign and developing a resource mobilization plan. While they are not very responsive and active recently, ER plans to continue the communication and maintain close contact to ensure further involvement and support. Additionally, communication has been established with the Van Leer Foundation to collaborate on supporting Addis Ababa's ECD activities, particularly in the areas of parental coaching and providing picture books for reading sessions at home and in ECD centers. As a result, a proposal has been developed to engage in book development and training for parental coaches, which has been submitted to the foundation. We are currently awaiting their response, as they have expressed interest in visiting our office in February 2025 for an in-person discussion to finalize the collaboration details.
- Throughout the year, ER has actively participated in various programs organized by different organizations. These included the Ethiopian Press Agency's inauguration of a new children's magazine, an event hosted by the French Embassy for the launch of a new book of French folktales translated into four Ethiopian local languages, and the Girls Growing Education Summit. ER also engaged in discussions with the founders of the "Chapters and Chats" book club from Addis Ababa University's Faculty of Science, exploring potential partnerships to promote reading. Additionally, ER took part in a panel discussion organized by CCRDA on the pressing issue of peace in the country. ER was also recognized by Tikuret Le Setoch ena Hitsanat (Attention for Women and Children Association) for donating books. Furthermore, ER's network school libraries were visited by boards of ER Dr. Laurie Curtis and Mrs. Carol Sett gast, where they met with school principals, toured the libraries, and engaged in discussions.

- A librarian discussion was held at Addis Meraf Primary School to gather updated information on the status of school libraries. The session was attended by 39 participants, including librarians, school principals, and teachers.
- A one-on-one librarian training is provided by ER trainer to the staff at Mery Primary School one of ER's network schools, to enhance the professional development of their library team.
- ER organized a significant meeting with education office personnel from the sub-cities of Addis Ababa. These offices are responsible for supervising schools within their district/ sub-cities. The meeting aimed to establish a connection with these offices, discuss the status of school libraries, and explore potential challenges that ER and the sub-cities can address collaboratively.

Project Numbers in 2024

Project Metrics of the Year, 2024		
No.	Project/Activity	Numbers
1	Gebeta Library visitors (2024)	373 children
2	Hawassa Reading Center visitors (2024)	949 children
3	DML users (2024)	2,453 children
4	HPL users (2024)	1,102 children
5	Books donated (imported)	5,611 books
6	Books donated (reprinted)	1,550 books
7	Books donated (locally purchased)	590 books
8	Books donated (RSG titles)	50 books
9	Parents trained (Family Literacy events in Gebeta and HRC)	34 (17 per event)
10	Volunteers in summer camp (Gebeta and HRC)	38 (30 female, 8 male)
11	Children in summer camp (Gebeta)	81 (41 female, 40 male)
12	Children in summer camp (Hawassa)	54 (21 girls, 33 boys)
13	Books for MOF project	135,120 bilingual storybooks in 5 languages
14	Households reached (WB storybook project)	26,667 households

- **Total Children: 5,012**
- **Total Books: 142,921**
- **Total families (Outreach program): 26,701**
- **Total Volunteers: 38**

MAJOR CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

1. **Security Issues:** The execution of the WB storybook development and distribution project faced significant security concerns, which hindered the team's ability to conduct field training and distribution activities. However, with unwavering dedication and the implementation of effective mitigation strategies, the project was ultimately completed successfully.
2. **Delays in Project Agreements:** The signing process for the second book distribution project, aimed at conflict-affected schools in collaboration with the FDRE Ministry of Finance, was prolonged due to time-consuming back-and-forth negotiations. It also forced the cancellation of planned projects such as the reading festival and the book reprinting project.
3. **Power and Electricity Interruptions:** Frequent power outages caused significant disruptions to project activities within the office, hindering the smooth progression of work.
4. **Rising Costs and Inflation:** The high inflation rate and the corresponding increase in commodity prices impacted our projects, particularly the procurement of books, leading to budgetary constraints to purchase more quantities of books(The price of books in the market is highly increased).
5. **High Demand for Library Support:** The demand from schools for materials and furniture, including IT equipment, stationery, and tables and chairs for their libraries is huge and created stress while doing other projects such as librarian discussion and trainings.
6. **IT Infrastructure Challenges:** Major IT issues at the head office, including outdated and malfunctioning computers, created obstacles to the efficient and timely execution of tasks. Addressing this issue is crucial to ensuring smooth operations moving forward.
7. **Lack of Professional Camera:** The absence of a professional camera to document project implementation posed a significant challenge. This gap hindered the ability to capture high-quality pictures for reporting and promotional purposes. Addressing this issue promptly is essential to ensure effective documentation of future projects.
8. **Adverse Weather Conditions:** Heavy rainy season significantly impacted the HPL project, causing delays in its implementation. Creating some kind of shade or covering material should be considered for the next winter.

CONCLUSIONS

The year 2024 has been a pivotal year for Ethiopia Reads , marked by a series of successful activities that contributed significantly to the organization's mission. Through dedicated efforts and consistent execution, ER has not only accomplished its set goals but has also gathered valuable insights from each task undertaken. These learning are vital for refining strategies and enhancing performance as we approach 2025.

The heartfelt feedback and appreciation from families directly impacted by Ethiopia Reads literacy and reading projects stand as a powerful affirmation of the meaningful work being accomplished. Their enthusiastic responses ensured the critical role ER plays in fostering a culture of reading and enhancing literacy within the community. This support serves as both a validation of our efforts and a driving force for our team, motivating each member to consistently strive for excellence and exceed expectations.

As we step into the New Year, this collective encouragement energizes our resolve to build on the successes of the past, setting even higher aspirations for 2025. We are steadfast in our commitment to expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and inspiring a lifelong love for reading among children across the nation. Together, with the continued support of our generous donors, board members, experts, staffs, communities and partners, we look forward to creating an even brighter future through the transformative power of literacy.

Those Who Read, Bloom!