IMPACT STORY
AUGUST 2018

QESSP
Ethiopia Quality Education
Strategic Support Programme

Empowering head teachers with evidence and skills to improve schools

THE **SITUATION**

Mr Abayneh is the head teacher at the Ammanuel Primary School. Founded in 1941, the school has over 1,274 students (649 female). Under Mr Abayneh's leadership over the past five years, the school has failed to meet inspection standards – a nationwide system that measures school performance across Ethiopia. In 2017, the Ammanuel Primary School was rated below standard (Level 1) – a disappointing result for Abayneh.

The Ammanuel Primary School is located in the Amhara Regional State, the second largest region in the country with a total student population of almost five million. There are 7,000 primary schools and 81 percent are considered below standard.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau have implemented various interventions aimed at improving the schools and student learning outcomes, but there has been minimal or no improvement.

The **national inspection framework** in Ethiopia ranks schools on 26 standards – designed to measure school performance against the sector's overarching education goals.

Level	Score
1 – Below standard	Below 50%
2 – Improving	50% - 69.99%
3 – Meets the standard	70% - 89.99%
4 – Above the standard	90% - 100%

"The improvement began with acknowledging the fact that I should take responsibility for the result and should lead the efforts to improve the school. The eleven priority standards helped me remain focussed throughout the year."

Mr Abayneh, Head Teacher, Ammanuel Primary School



Third grade student from a school involved in the pilot project

THE **RESPONSE**

The Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP) partnered with the Amhara Regional Education Bureau to address the problem. A pilot project was designed to support failing primary schools (368). The aim was to improve their inspection ratings and move up a level within one academic year. The project also worked with the Regional Education Bureau to strengthen its analysis, monitoring and evaluation skills – so that the bureau could generate evidence to drive planning and decision making.

QESSP worked with the Regional Education Bureau to analyse the inspection results from each school. A report was produced highlighting the major challenges. Leadership from each school was then invited to participate in a four-day school improvement planning workshop.

Abayneh was nominated to lead the school improvement project for the Ammanuel Primary School. At first, he was hesitant and did not want to participate in the pilot project. He attended the QESSP workshop with the cluster supervisor and deputy head teacher but had low expectations. Abayneh believed that most trainings were not practical. However, he was pleasantly surprised after the first day of the QESSP workshop.

Abayneh received a detailed report and a scorecard for his school. It gave him further insight about the challenges unique to his school, which enabled him to engage in an extensive discussion about the reason for the poor results. The role of the head teacher was also explored and how to engage the community to improve results.

The workshop participants jointly identified 11 key priority standards from the national inspection framework. A draft school improvement plan was then developed with a clear responsibility matrix between the school, the cluster supervisor and the woreda education office.

THE **RESULTS**

After the training, Abayneh was empowered. He displayed a banner with the inspection goals and priorities for the 2018 academic year in the community market. Abayneh acknowledged that success could not be achieved alone and worked in partnership with the community - the parent teacher student association, teachers, cluster supervisors and local authorities - to finalise and implement the school improvement plan. He was instrumental in initiating and monitoring the action plan to ensure that it was on track.

Following the initial workshop, QESSP supported the Regional Education Bureau to host two learn and share events, which brought together all of the schools involved in the pilot project. The schools undertook a self-assessment to track and discuss progress to date.

Abayneh's initial goal was to achieve a Level 2 rating in the 2018 inspection. After the self-assessment, he changed the target to Level 3. He collaborated with teachers, students, parents, and the woreda education bureau to achieve this ambitious goal. The hard work paid off. The Ammanuel Primary School was rated a Level 3 in the 2018 inspection - one of only four schools in the pilot to improve two levels.



"Prioritisation based on evidence, community engagement, and consistent delivery and leadership were key to achieving this outstanding result. We have worked better as a team in my school and there is renewed commitment and energy to do even better next academic year."



Learn and share event with school leaders

"My goal is that the Ammanuel Primary School will achieve a level 4 ranking in the 2019 school inspections."

NEXT STEPS

The pilot project revealed that empowering school leaders with evidence, knowledge and skills and giving them a lead role can create a strong impact in a short time and does not require a large financial commitment.

Supporting capacity development at two levels, oversight institutions (REBs) and schools, is an effective way to achieve results and embed new practices, skills and improved ways of working across the sector. Furthermore, school improvement requires a joint effort – school leadership, teachers, local authorities, community leaders, parents and students.

The Amhara Regional Education Bureau is planning to scale up the pilot project activities across the region. The success achieved at the Ammanuel Primary School under Abayneh's leadership can serve as an inspiration to other schools in the region. The best performing school leaders, like Abayneh, will be invited to share their experiences with their peers. Encouraged by his achievements, Abayneh has ambitious plans for the next academic year.

ABOUT **QESSP**

The **Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP)** aims to enhance the capacity of the education sector in Ethiopia to improve outcomes for learners. We support partners to implement reforms, enhance policy dialogue and improve the evidence base to inform education policy by providing technical assistance, management support and flexible funds. We focus on these areas: teacher education, school leadership, inclusive education, curriculum development, and system wide strengthening. QESSP is a four-year programme funded by UK aid from the UK government and managed by the British Council.

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