

Shambu Alumni 4th Round Book Donation Report



June 2013

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This project was initially started about five years ago by few former graduates of Shambu High School to support the School by providing reference books as a one-time project. However, after successful delivery of the books to Shambu High School, the first contributors decided to continue with the project by making similar contribution every year and expand the support to other high schools in the former Horro Guduru sub-province (Awraja). Earlier there was only one (Shambu) high school in the Awraja. But today there are at least one or more high schools in each district and all of them have critical shortage or even lack of the necessary facilities and supplies such as books to support effective teaching and learning process. Thus, the group decided to support at least one or more school every year depending upon the amount of fund raised each year and persistently continue with the process until all high schools are supported. Accordingly in the second round three high schools (Hareto, Saqala and Chambe) and in the third round two high schools (Fincha'a and Alibo or Jarte) were supported. We started with Shambu High School and we are radiating away from Shambu to more distant schools year after year. Following the same pattern, the current or fourth round is the turn of Amuru and Kombolcha high schools.

1.2. Why focus on books?

Books are the sources of information and knowledge and all our high schools have critical shortage of books in their libraries. Some of them do not have any relevant reference materials both for students and teachers alike. Most students cannot afford to buy reference books and even for those who can afford cannot get access as there are no book dealers in any of the districts. As a result both the teachers and students are handicapped with respect to access to relevant reference materials. This has got an adverse effect on the quality of education and on the capacity of the students to compete at a national level, first in national school leaving and university entrance examinations and secondly in their ability to compete with other students after joining universities/higher education institutions.

The other reason why we focus on books is that the amount of money we raise each year is not that big. Thus it will not be adequate for other supports such as construction of class rooms or purchase of computers or laboratory facilities. In comparison books have relatively lower monetary value although their use value is very high and their presence is very crucial for the success of the students in their studies and in preparing them for future competition. Our aim is not to make a very big investment in the education sector but to play a catalytic role to enhance the quality of education and competitiveness of the students at regional, national and international levels by availing critically needed reference books with modest financial support and inculcating the sense of competition among the students, teachers and schools.

1.3. How are the books purchased and donated and what kinds of books are included?

First the Directors of the beneficiary high schools are contacted and asked to provide the list of books they want to be bought for them from the domestic market. Then books available in the major book shops in Addis Ababa are assessed and those books that can serve as references for high school students and teachers are selected and purchased. Usually we try to keep the balance of the different subjects – languages (English, Amharic and Afan Oromo), Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Civics and Ethical Education, Economics, Management, Accounting, Computer Science, Aptitude and Dictionaries. In addition, some books that are useful for general knowledge and that may be useful for school management are also included. We also buy some charts and maps that can serve as teaching/learning aids. Most of the books are published in the country based on the curriculum adopted in the country. However, we also include some books published abroad esp. in the areas of English language, biology, chemistry, physics and some general knowledge. We give special attention to English language resources, including teaching guides, as our students back home have a serious deficiency in English language, which limits their capacity to understand the subjects they are studying in high schools and higher learning institutions since English is the media of instruction at these levels. Their language deficiency also affects their capacity to express themselves and compete with other students.

2. Report of the Fourth Round of Donation

The fourth round of book donation was given to two high schools (Kombolcha and Amuru) as indicated above. Delivery of the books was accomplished during April 26-28, 2013. A total of 703 books of 127 different titles were purchased for this round of which 353 books of 127 different titles worth of Birr 26,505.27 (twenty six thousand five hundred five Birr and twenty seven cents) were given to Amuru and 350 books of 125 different titles worth of Birr 26,508.67 (twenty six thousand five hundred eight Birr and sixty seven cents) were given to Kombolcha high school.

2.1. What are the formalities for handing over the books?

The reference books are purchased from book dealers in Addis and made ready for transport by packing in different cartons. These are stored in the house of one of our contributors until all the needed books are purchased and delivery date is fixed with the concerned schools and transport is arranged. After arrival at the respective schools, the books are unpacked, displayed and counted in the presence of the school management, teachers and students as well as the head or representative of the district office of education, district school supervisors and district administrators as witnesses. In the case of Amuru, students were not present because the delivery was done on Saturday. Then each book was registered on a receiving report and officially received by the store keeper of the school and we receive an official receipt. In addition, the

School director writes an acknowledgment letter acknowledging receipt of the books donated to their respective schools. This gives us assurance that the books will not be diverted for personal use by individuals and will be used for the intended purpose.



Fig. 1. Students and staff unloading (left) and unpacking (right) books at Kombolcha high school

2.2. Reception of the schools and their feed backs

At both high schools we were very warmly received by the school management, the elders and woreda administration. Despite the relatively low financial value of our donation, at each school the initiation was very highly appreciated. Some of them made very emotional statements (highly valuing this symbolic gesture as exemplary) in their speeches during the occasion. In general, we observed very high enthusiasm and appreciation from the school community and district administrators in both schools. Particularly the students were very happy to unload, unpack and carry the books to the book store. Very high appreciation is given to the very thought of the idea than the actual monetary value of the donation. Now people have started discussing what they also can do in their capacity. The school directors have indicated that they will provide special shelves for the books that we gave them as a means of special recognition. I feel that this is very encouraging for us and that we need to keep up the momentum.



Figure 2. Students at Kombolcha high school eagerly waiting to see the books brought to them

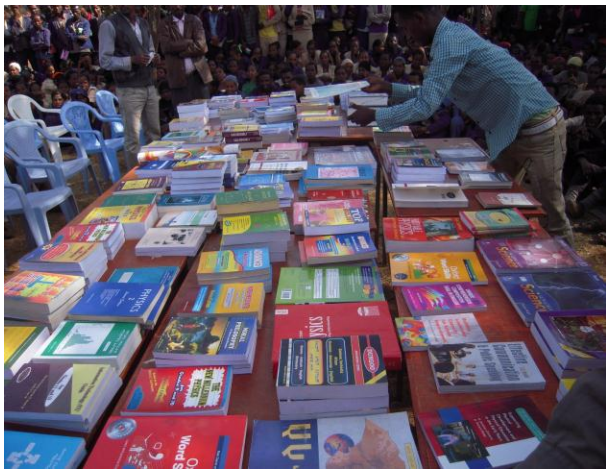


Figure 3. Display of books donated to Kombolcha (left) and Amuru (right) high schools



Figure 4. Administrators of Guduru woreda (left) and Amuru woreda (right) expressing their appreciation after the books were delivered to each school.

3. What does the trend look like?

The first contribution was made by very few individuals, about 10-12 individuals from Norway and 3 individuals from Ethiopia. Since then, both the geographical coverage and the number of our contributors has shown a significant increase year after year. The number of local contributors increased from 3 in 2009 to 24 in 2012/13 and their contribution increased from Birr 3000 to Birr 28,200.

4. Financial Report (omitted)

5. What is the way forward?

As indicated above we started with very limited number of contributors in an informal way on trust basis. In fact although collection of contributions was done informally the purchase of books and delivery to each school was accomplished following formal procedures. So far this has worked very effectively to meet the objective. This has helped us to test our capacity and commitment to act together to address the educational needs of our younger brothers and sisters back home. I believe that we have now accumulated enough experience handling such a project. However, the increasing number of our contributors from different parts of the world makes it imperative to transform the modality of our operation from informal to a more formal way. This has been a subject of discussion since the last two years.

In order to address the growing concern of formalizing our operation, recently there have been discussions in different small groups and two possible options have been suggested. The first option is to establish the association as a body that deals with multifaceted community development issues focusing on socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues with education or human capacity building masked in the other components of the program. The main

justification for this mode of organization is to attract external support through the other components of the programs as donors do not provide financial support for formal education. Although the idea is very smart and tempting, some of us are a bit skeptical that the increased number of activities may overshadow the education component, which is our prime target. On top of that although it may be possible to attract external funding through this approach, it is very unlikely that the funds obtained would benefit the education component since the funds will be tagged with certain activities and it will not be possible to divert away to education. The other option was to establish an association that focuses only on education. In this case it is unlikely to attract external support and the operation will mainly depend upon contribution from members and donations from different domestic bodies such businessmen and companies who support the cause. There is more support for this approach among most of the local contributors who have been engaged in the discussion of the issue. Once a formal organization is established it would be easier to officially mobilize our community living both in the country and abroad to raise fund for the cause of improving the quality of education in our high schools so that the students become competent enough when they go to higher education both nationally and internationally. One of our contributors is currently drafting a proposal for establishing the association in this line. Once the draft proposal is ready it will be circulated for your comments and enrichment.

Once the Association is formally established, the following could be the possible activities that could be accomplished.

- Continuation of the provision book donation to the remaining high schools. After reaching all high schools in this way, further support will be based on need assessment and the demands (by preparing sound project proposals) on competitive basis
- Organizing forums and creating a sense of completion among the students, teachers and schools
- Giving seminars and training courses (visit by a group of former students to a few schools each year to discuss with teachers and students as a means of motivation for the teachers and students)
- Etc.