



HINTALO WEJIRAT

2014 COMPLETION REPORT





HOW WE GOT STARTED

In 2007, when imagine1day kicked off our efforts to help Ethiopia achieve its goal to ensure universal access to quality primary education, our first stop was the Ministry of Education. We knew that in order to be successful working within Ethiopia's public education system we needed the full support of the federal government, so we asked them about their priorities and the regions most in need of our support.

At the time, one of their top priorities was the region of Tigray, where many students were learning outdoors, protected from the elements only by the shade of a tree. Very few organizations were working to help advance education in this arid part of northern Ethiopia, even though education gaps were present in all districts throughout the region.

Upon deciding to work in Tigray, we then entered into discussions with its Education Bureau, and we learned that one of their priority districts within the region was Hintalo Wejirat. Through the process of visiting several communities and schools in the district and understanding the ways in which our investment could make a tangible difference, we selected Hintalo Wejirat as the first district we would partner with.

With the full support and encouragement of the federal, regional and district governments along with generous financial contributions from the Lundin for Africa Foundation and other corporate and individual donors, imagine1day embarked on our first project in Hintalo Wejirat in January 2007. Throughout the lifespan of this project, from 2007 to 2013, we helped advance education in 29 schools across Hintalo Wejirat. More than 11,000 children benefited from our investment of approximately \$1 million.



THE CHALLENGE

In 2008, the rural communities in the district of Hintalo Wejirat simply did not have enough financial support from the regional government to equip their children with a proper education. Most students were learning outdoors in “dass” classrooms with no shelter from the elements, class attendance was low, and student outcomes were suffering.

For example, in the community of Adiajero, more than 100 Grade 1 and 2 students would crowd into a three by three meter shelter made of twigs and leaves to learn their lessons . With no desks or protection from the heat, wind and rain, they sat on wood logs and stones for their four-hour lessons.

In the village of Geramberom, parents attempted to replace the makeshift shelter they built for their children’s education, however with no resources or engineering experience, their stone wall never reached more than a few feet high.

Meanwhile, in a small community called Seffo, school took place under a tree and ended after Grade 2. One dedicated mother spent her days walking her two daughters to and from the nearest school offering other Grades – two hours each way – to ensure that they could safely continue their education.





THE GAME PLAN

Our objectives were to improve the access, quality, equity and efficiency of education in Hintalo Wejirat. We wanted to ensure that community leaders, parents and educators were equipped to give their children the quality education they deserved over the long term independent of imagine1day's ongoing support. We would achieve these objectives by building new schools and increasing the professional capacity of teachers and school principals while elevating education awareness and leadership in the communities where we worked.



Between 2007 and 2013, our team focused on the following three areas to achieve our goals in this district:

1. New schools, latrines & waterpoints

- We built a total of eight school blocks in seven communities where children were previously learning in open-air environments with no desks or proper shelter.
- We built new gender-segregated latrines in 11 communities to improve health and sanitation in villages where children relied on the outdoors. This also helped prevent girls from dropping out once they hit puberty.
- Eleven new water points and wells provided a much-needed source of fuel for children during the day and encouraged girls—who are usually responsible for fetching water for their families—to attend class.

2. Capacity building for educators & community leaders

- We trained 186 Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members from 29 schools.
- Cumulatively, 299 teachers received training in Active Learning, Life Skills and Exam & Measurement over three years.
- A total of 29 school principals and six district

education supervisors were trained in school management and leadership over three years.

- We held three annual experience-sharing workshops with 261 PTA members, principals and model teachers over three years.
- Nine Project Advisory Council members from the district government were trained in project planning, monitoring and evaluation, leadership, communication and goal setting.

3. Educational supplies & support

- We provided combined desks, blackboards, science kits, reading corners, sports materials and school club supplies to 29 schools.
- We also planted 7,705 fruit and 12,145 shade trees in 29 schools throughout the district.
- Finally, parents, teachers and community leaders from 22 communities received income generation training and a total of \$10,000 in seed funding to ensure long-term sustainability of their school programs.



OUR RESULTS

Between 2007 and 2013, imagine1day improved the access, quality, equity and the efficiency of education in 29 primary schools in the district of Hintalo Wejirat. A total of 11,933 students, 299 teachers, 29 school principals and 186 Parent Teacher Association members benefitted from our efforts.

For example, in the village of Seffo, where students were learning outdoor under the shade of a tree, school attendance mushroomed from 82 students to 299 after we built their first standardized school.



Here are eight project highlights we achieved between November 2007 and December 2013:

1. There was an 11% increase in the amount of students enrolled in school.
2. In the 29 schools we worked with, there are now as many girls in school as there are boys.
3. Students' grade point average increased almost 5% throughout all the schools we worked with.
4. Thanks to imagine1day's capacity building with parents and community elders, the dropout rate fell a staggering 91.68%. Today, almost no children drop out of school.
5. Attendance rates in our schools increased from 90% to 94%.
6. Thanks to our Life Skills training program, 3,588 households, 160 teachers and 678 students opened savings accounts at their nearest bank—something that was unheard of before imagine1day arrived.
7. The amount of students with desks increased from 64% to 91%.
8. The rate of repetition between grades dropped by 85.25%.



WHAT WE LEARNED

1. How to prevent long-term decline

Despite our successes, we found that our teacher training efforts did not have the long-term impact that we were hoping for. When we last measured our impact in 2013, we found that only 48% of teachers were using the science kits, just 88% of teachers were applying active learning methodologies, and 76.6% of students were using the reading corners we had provided for their schools. The main reason for these long-term declines was high teacher turn over. During our time in Hintalo Wejirat, we only worked with 29 out of 72 schools throughout the district. As a result, many of the teachers present in imagine1day schools in 2013 had never participated in the trainings we facilitated between 2008 and 2011, and the impact of our work was lost over time. This led to a fundamental evolution in our program model, which now involves us working with every school throughout a district to ensure long-term impact even when faced with high intra-district teacher movement and turnover.



2. How to work with a district government

Although from the outset of this project we worked closely with representatives spanning all the sector offices in the district government, we faced a challenge with the district not doing their part to take ownership for the project outputs. For example, when water points or other school infrastructure needed maintenance, we had to repeatedly return to communities to address these issues rather than seeing the district and its sector offices taking joint responsibility.

To ensure long-term sustainability, we knew we needed the district's full buy in and ownership. As a result in 2010, we formally established a Project Advisory Council (PAC) which included nine members of the district government, representing each sector office. Each PAC member signed a memorandum of understanding so that everyone was aware of their responsibilities. In addition, we trained all our PAC members in communication and leadership and in quarterly monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The formation of the PAC has had a dramatic impact. Since the PAC's formation, imagine1day has not had to return to previous projects to maintain the infrastructure we've built because the government, through the leadership of the PAC, is supporting communities and their schools. Now, when the head of water management learns that a well is broken, he will dispatch someone from his office to assess and fix the issue.

3. How to create community ownership & long-term sustainability

Finally, we found that in some communities, Parent Teacher Associations and community members lacked motivation to carry forward programming and maintain infrastructure we had brought to their schools and communities. As a result, we further developed our model to establish stronger community ownership and ultimately project sustainability by requiring communities to make financial contributions to all construction projects. We learned that if every parent and every home contributes the cost of just one brick, a community is more likely to maintain and treat their school as they would their own property.



WHERE WE ARE NOW

In 2012, we starting phasing out of 13 of the 29 communities we were working with in Hintalo Wejirat. The remaining 16 schools will be phased out by December 2014. Before we phase out of a school, we meet with all the members of a community's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to discuss how their school has changed, what their income generation plan is, and how they plan to cover the costs of sports materials, books, laboratory materials and general school maintenance in the long-term. Once they have established a realistic plan that everyone is satisfied with, all members of the PTA sign the agreement.

In the 13 schools we've already phased out of, students are excelling. In eight of our schools, 100% of Grade 8 students passed the National Exam in 2012, and another four schools had a 90% pass rate. These 12 schools had the highest National Exam success rate in the district of Hintalo Wejirat that year. In addition, during the district's annual school evaluation (which takes into account 53 different criteria), 12 of our schools rated above the district average. Finally, in the 13 schools already phased out, all schools had established a PTA succession plan, which none of them had before; income generation grew an astonishing 430%; and the participation of female leaders increased from 20% to 50%.

This December, imagine1day will phase out of the remaining 16 schools we've been working with in Hintalo Wejirat. As we exit Hintalo Wejirat, the first district to welcome imagine1day, we look forward to watching all the students, parents and teachers achieve the goals they envision for themselves.

"We have many bright students in this district," says Daniel Ataklti, imagine1day's Manager of Operations and Monitoring and Evaluation. "I think we will see many doctors, teachers and pilots come from there in the years to come. They will be the future leaders of their villages, of their district, and maybe even of our country."





A STORY FROM THE FIELD

How Atsembe's student population grew ten-fold in just four years

School in Atsembe used to be a marathon of discomfort for the few children who chose to attend. Their open air, informal twig classroom left the school's 44 students exposed to the elements. With the nearest formal school a two-hour walk away, imagine1day decided to build the community's first Grade 1-4 classrooms in 2010.

Just 18 months later, Atsembe was transformed. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) led the planting of 2,000 fruit and shade trees on school land; the drop out rate decreased by 50%; the average school GPA increased from 64% to 69%; and the Grade 4 completion rate increased to 98.6%.

Faced with such commitment, imagine1day decided to continue building. With 165 children walking an average of 6 km each day to continue their education past Grade 4, imagine1day began the construction of new Grade 5-8 classrooms.





In a few years, Atsemba Primary School morphed from an open-air dass school with 44 students to a full Grade 1-8 Primary School with 463 students.

When all these new classrooms were complete, Vice Principal Huluf Abraha noticed a remarkable change. "This new school has changed our community. We only have five students who should be in school and are not. We have the full support of the local church and community. We have a bright future ahead of us with the trainings, resources and Income Generation Activities you have provided us with. We are empowered to educate generations to come."

In October 2014, imagine1day took things even farther: we inaugurated a brand new laboratory, library, a pedagogical room, and an innovative Early Childhood Education (ECE) classroom.

In the library, students can now spend time reading books and studying after class. In the pedagogical room, teachers can build hands-on teaching aids to improve their students' engagement and learning outcomes, and in the laboratory, students can experiment with chemicals, slides and a microscope to see science at work. In Atsemba's new ECE classroom, children are learning through play with toys made of wood and natural fibers.

Thanks to the generosity of imagine1day's donors, a whole new generation in Atsemba is working hard to lift the entire community towards a brighter future.

Grade 4 student Akeza is only 10 years old, but she is already looking forward to helping her family and her village: "I know now that education is more important than looking after cows. Cows can't teach you anything, but going to school means endless learning. In the future, I think that having an education will mean I won't just have to look after cows, I can do things that help other people."

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