

Ethiopian Rural Education Project

The Ethiopian Rural Education Project (EREP) will establish two inexpensive yet highly effective model schools to teach the first four grades of curriculum in Western Wollega, Ethiopia. (Four years is commonly accepted as the level necessary for permanent literacy and numeracy.) The curriculum will be modeled on the system developed by the Rishi Valley Institute for Education Resources (RIVER) in India. Drawing on the expertise of RIVER administrators and teachers, the EREP will adapt the Ethiopian curriculum to the Rishi Valley methodology.

The Rishi Valley model is efficient, inexpensive, and highly effective, and was selected by the educational leaders in Dembi Dollo, Ethiopia, to implement in their community. The schools use inexpensive, computer-generated, instruction cards. (The cards are sometimes referred to as the "school in a box".) Because the cards are laminated, their life span is extended to about three years. Children progress through the cards only after satisfying the teacher that they have mastered the previous step. Children study in groups defined by learning level (not age) and help each other learn under the supervision of a teacher.

Teachers in these schools require less formal education than teachers in government schools. Teachers create the instructional cards, thus becoming intimately familiar with the materials. Children who complete the curriculum in India perform as well or better on state examinations compared to children who attend the Indian government schools. The "school in a box" has been adopted by many localities in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India, and has been adapted for tribal peoples and for other states (and languages) in India.

Annually, the schoolchildren and their parents join others from their village to plant seedlings grown in the Rishi Valley plant nursery. The EREP will incorporate similar land reclamation and reforestation activities. Such environmentalism is encouraged by the Ethiopian government.

The EREP schools will serve 40 students (20 in each school) taught by one teacher in each school. Children are the primary target group, but as it becomes possible, the schools also may offer instruction at night to interested women. The funding proposal is for four years. Upon successful completion of this project EREP may consider establishing additional schools based on the model.

Although the schools are inexpensive to operate, initial project start up includes costly airfare to support an onsite consultancy by the project director (PD) and two RIVER administrators in Ethiopia; airfare, subsistence, and educational supplies for three Ethiopians to work at Rishi Valley in India for up to 10 weeks to develop educational materials; and a later consultancy of the PD and two RIVER administrators in Ethiopia during early implementation. An initial feasibility study by the Ethiopians in India has been completed at a cost of \$8,000. The total project cost for the first four years of establishing the two model schools is \$70,500 of which \$15,000 is committed. Funds sought are \$55,500. I propose that Wellspring, Inc. provide administrative oversight of the project's financial accounts.

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POPULATION

The population of the area, though growing rapidly, is predominantly rural. Population growth is due to natural increase, but especially to immigration into the area under a central government resettlement program.

Western Wollega Project Area

Wereda	Population, 1994*			2000 est.**	
	Urban	Rural	Total	% Rural	Total
Dale Lalo	4,323	90,831	95,154	95%	113,619
Gawo Dale	7,495	103,756	111,251	93%	132,840
Seyo	19,587	91,950	111,537	82%	133,181
Anfilo	4,908	50,939	55,847	91%	66,684
Gedami Jima	3,934	85,512	89,446	96%	106,803
Hawa Welel	2,986	78,794	81,780	96%	97,650
TOTAL	43,233	501,782	545,015	92%	650,777

NOTE: Dembi Dolo is in Seyo, hence the larger urban population.

*Source: UNDP

**Source: UN-EUE (Emergency Unit for Ethiopia) July-December 2000 - revised August 2000.

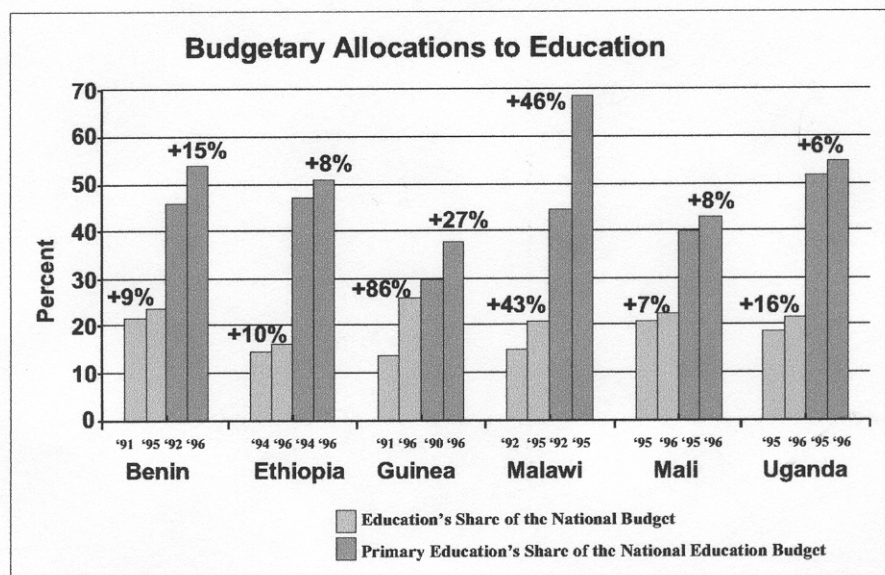
NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

USAID's analysis has determined that Ethiopia has the political, economic, and institutional conditions supportive of basic education reform and development¹:

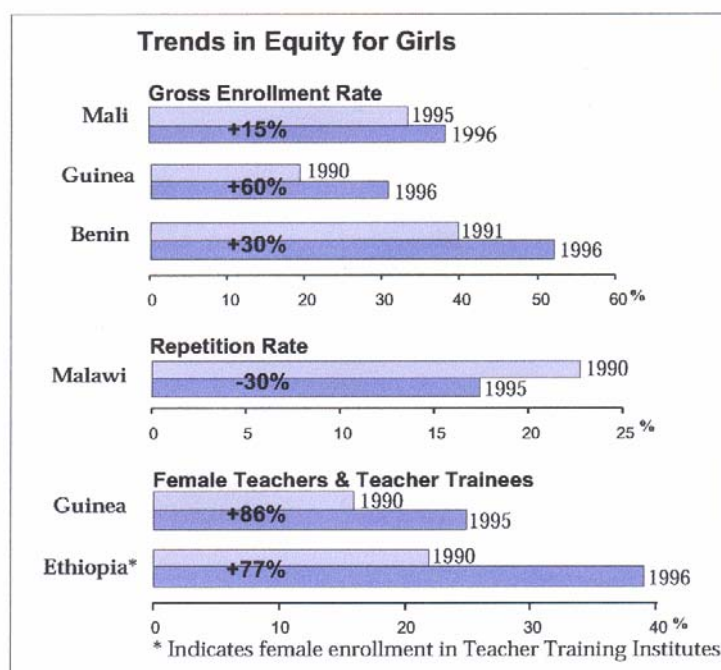
- Macroeconomic policies are in place that lead to improved economic performance
- The government is committed to a policy of human capacity development and basic education as a priority for growth
- The education sector has a committed leadership and a reform strategy

¹ USAID's Strategic Framework for Basic Education in Africa (1998), p. 15.

The following chart shows Ethiopia's increase in budgetary allocations to education.²



National policy in gender equity is reflected in the following chart. The Ethiopian data shows a large increase in female teachers and teacher trainees in the period from 1990 to 1996. Consistent with national policy, commitment to gender equity is an element of the Ethiopian Rural Education Project (EREP).



² USAID's Strategic Framework for Basic Education in Africa (1998), p. 8.

³ USAID's Strategic Framework for Basic Education in Africa (1998), p. 7.

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia that was formed in 1991 has undertaken a major reform of the nation's educational system to address the following identified problems⁴:

- low primary school participation
- rural areas and girls are not well served
- the quality of education is low
- the system is inefficient
- funding is inadequate
- capacity for planning and management is weak

The national curriculum has been revised to give greater emphasis to languages, mathematics, and natural sciences. The curriculum for grades 1-4 is described in the following chart. The EREP will comply with the national curriculum.

Primary Education first cycle (grades 1-4): Period Allotment by Subject and Grade					
Area	Subject	Grade			
		1	2	3	4
Language	Mother tongue	5	5	4	4
	English	5	5	5	5
	National language			6	6
Mathematics	Mathematics	5	5	5	5
Natural Science	Science	5	5	5	5
Social Science	Social Studies	4	4	4	4
Aesthetic Education	Physical Education	2	2	2	2
	Music	2	2	2	2
	Arts	2	2	2	2
	Total periods/week	35	35	35	35

Source: Ethiopian National Agency for UNESCO, The Development of Education: National Report of Ethiopia, 2001, p. 29.

The educational goals of the EREP are consistent with the profile of students who finish the first four years of primary schooling using the national curriculum:⁵

- They will be able to write in standardized calligraphy, read properly and compute correctly with the four basic operations in numeracy.
- They will have some awareness about themselves and about their families and feel society's responsibilities and problems. They feel responsible for their actions. They also try to solve problems.

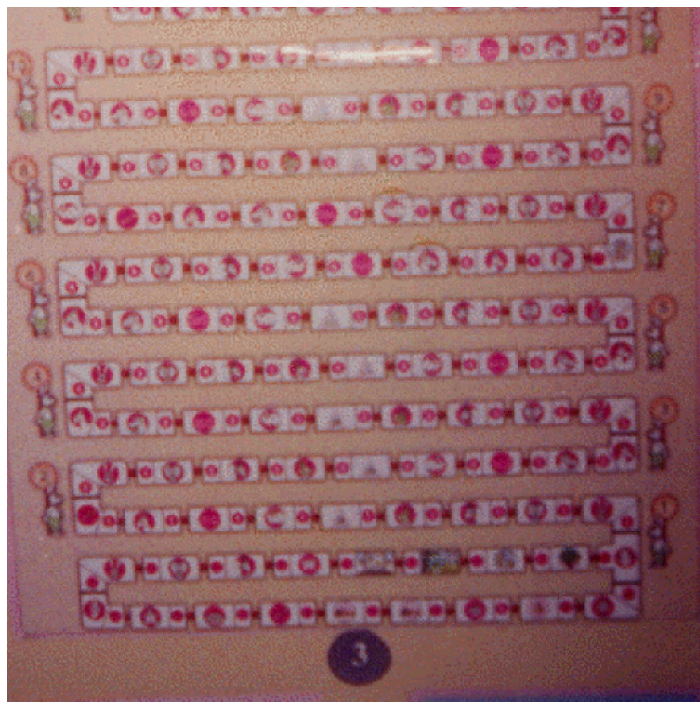
⁴ Ethiopian National Agency for UNESCO, The Development of Education: National Report of Ethiopia (2001), p. 7.

⁵ Ethiopian National Agency for UNESCO. The Development of Education: National Report of Ethiopia, 2001, p. 26.

- They know the purpose of the different materials at home, and can use these materials and take proper care of them.
- They will be able to observe the work and production activities practiced in their surroundings and can also participate in labor activities of their choice.
- They will be able to examine, compare and identify useful and harmful outlooks, beliefs, and practices at individual, family and societal levels and will be able to make decisions for themselves.
- They will be able to seek information when faced with problems and make rational use of it.
- They will exhibit great willingness to try and practice different activities, which are compatible with their abilities.
- They will be able to look after personal hygiene and environmental sanitation.
- They will be able to work cooperatively with others for the common good.

THE RISHI VALLEY METHOD OF LEARNING

The Rishi Valley Institute for Education Resources (RIVER) developed an effective learning method founded on principles expressed by the philosopher, J. Krishnamurti (refer to <http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/> for a portal to his philosophy). Essential elements are the importance of freedom and the absence of fear. The learning method sometimes is referred to as the school in the box. The boxes consists of learning cards and various learning activities. Each box contains materials for a subject area, such as mathematics. Boxes are marked with common animal and other symbols that enable an illiterate child to identify correctly the various boxes of materials. Animal logos represent language, birds represent mathematics, and insects represent environmental studies. Environmental studies broadly encompass the world around the child including hygiene and cultural foundations.



Children select learning cards based on their progress on the learning ladder. The learning ladder symbols are coordinated with the symbols on the boxes. When a child masters a learning card to the satisfaction of the teacher, then the child returns the card to the correct box and looks at the learning ladder to identify the next card to study (usually from a different subject matter box).

Children study individually and in groups, with the teacher present or not as appropriate. The groups consist of children of any age who are ready for a particular level of study in the curriculum. Thus, the curriculum is multi-level, multi-grade, and self-paced.



These children study different subject matter, each thoroughly absorbed in his or her work.

These girls are studying together.



The teacher is always present and accessible.

Environmentalism and land reclamation are essential components of the Rishi Valley rural education program. Periodically, children from the schools join villagers for a day of transplanting seedlings.



Mr. Sailendran (left) is in charge of the plant nursery. He is shown here with Worete Gelacha and Teferi Dina from Ethiopia.



Over time, deforestation has affected large areas of the landscape around Rishi Valley.

The environmental program that is part of the Rishi Valley mission has reclaimed hundreds of acres. Each year, additional areas are added, to the benefit of the village environments.

