

# Changing the Lives of Out of School Youth through Basic Education



In Ethiopia, the condition of out-of-school youth has long been a pressing concern, with limited access to basic education hindering their prospects for economic and social advancement. Recognizing this challenge, the USAID Ethiopia's Integrated Youth Activity - Kefeta has been leading Functional Youth

Literacy initiative, designed to equip out-of-school youth with basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills vital for their future success. Central to this mission is the provision of flexible basic education opportunities tailored to the specific needs of out-of-school youth aged 15-29 in 18 cities throughout the country.

## Why Functional Youth Literacy?

Evidence shows that many out-of-school youths face significant challenges in their lives due to an inability to read and write properly. Kefeta's Functional Youth Literacy program is essential for these youths, helping them to develop reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Upon completing the Functional Literacy sessions, participants will be able to read and write proficiently and will also receive employability skills training and other integrated Kefeta services. Improved literacy and numeracy skills will enable them to attend entrepreneurship and employability training more easily, enhance their financial literacy and manage their small businesses more effectively, and overall, enhance their daily lives.

*The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Ethiopia's Integrated Youth Activity (IYA) - Kefeta is a five-year Activity implemented by Amref Health Africa (Amref) and its consortium partners since August 2021. Kefeta aims to benefit at least two million Ethiopian youths in 18 cities. Kefeta is designed to be implemented in 18 target cities including Mekelle, Tigray region of Ethiopia. However, the project implementation in Mekelle had been delayed due to the conflict and resumed only at the beginning of 2024 fiscal year.*

*For more information:  
Chalachew Tiruneh - Chief of Party  
Integrated Youth Activity - Kefeta  
Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia  
Office +251116627851 I  
Email: [chalachew.tiruneh@amref.org](mailto:chalachew.tiruneh@amref.org)*



## KEY LESSONS FROM KEFETA'S APPROACH TO YOUTH FUNCTIONAL LITERACY SESSIONS

**Youth-Friendly approaches are the pillars of Kefeta's Youth Literacy Sessions:** The literacy sessions were designed to be flexible and experiential, tailored to address the specific needs of out-of-school youth. Learning spaces were strategically located near their homes and residences in safe environments, making it easier for participants to attend. By adapting the program schedule to fit their needs, ensuring relevant content, and employing facilitation techniques that resonate with young people, the program became more accessible. This approach emphasized inclusivity, and convenience, ensuring that youth could easily access and benefit from the services provided.

**Language was a key consideration for the success:** Kefeta's youth literacy session has two levels; level one spans 3 months, while level two extends a maximum of 3 months as well. Each level includes a locally translated facilitator's guide, participant workbook, and pocketbook designed to support independent learning. Kefeta facilitate the youth literacy sessions in six local languages including Afar, Sidamafo, Afsomali, Afan Oromo, Amharic and Tigrigna. This has advanced the interest, participation and relevance of the literacy sessions to the youth.

**Effective mobilization techniques helped for reaching out-of-school youth.** Various mobilization techniques were employed to effectively reach the targeted out-of-school youth. These techniques included below-the-line communication strategies, which involved direct and personalized marketing methods such as community outreach, local events, and grassroots campaigns. Additionally, referral systems were utilized, where existing participants and community members recommended and guided out-of-school youth to the program. These combined efforts ensured a broader and more effective reach to the intended demographic.

**Functional Literacy Empowers Youths Beyond Basic Literacy:** Kefeta's Functional Literacy program has significant impact on out-of-school youth, extending beyond the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Participants in the program have experienced improvements in their self-confidence, interpersonal skills, ability to build positive relationships, understanding of gender roles, business management, and employability opportunities. Henok Aklok, 19, attending Session I in Dessie City, said, "I did not have any reading and writing skills before. I have started by reading some simple sentences and writing my name and my friends' names, and I have begun signing bank slips. Beyond literacy, I have also developed self-awareness and set goals for the future."

**Kefeta integrated education with comprehensive youth services.** The Basic Education Services integrates other Kefeta services in two ways. It deliberately incorporates multi-sectoral content that supports youths in the Functional Literacy curriculum. Second, it refers youths to receive family planning counseling and commodities, soft skills & employability skills training, civic engagement activities, and access to finance. Nuradin Munano, aged 22, participated in Kefeta's Youth Functional Literacy sessions in Shashamene's Didaboke village. He expressed, "I have acquired the ability to read, write, and enhance my numeracy skills. The literacy session helped me manage my small business selling fast food on the street. I have also joined Kefeta's SACCO and started saving, experiencing notable improvement." Nuradin completed the level two sessions, and he aims for formal education. Reflecting on his journey, he acknowledges Kefeta's role in enhancing his financial literacy.



**59**  
Trained  
facilitators



**12,000**  
Out-of-school youth  
trained

**> 80** Females

**1.4%** youth  
with disabilities



**85%** Passed Ministry  
of Education's "Yebrhan  
Mizena" Assessment



**78%** youth improved their  
reading skills as per Out-of-School  
Literacy Assessment (OLA)

## Building New Footholds: A Two-Way Street

Nothing disenfranchises young people more than illiteracy. The impracticality of coming of age in the digital era without being able to write one's name or read a sign soon gives way to the impossibility of a viable and secure future. The crisis is further compounded by the stigma of being young and illiterate, forcing these youth further underground or remain on the fringes.

At 27, Serke Hamedi is a single mother of two who is also physically challenged. She grew up in a rural town without access to primary education. When she moved to the city of Dessie, she ended up homeless and unemployed. Living on the generosity of the community, school was the furthest thing from her mind.

That is, until she was referred to Kefeta's functional literacy training in Dessie.

Focused on providing instructions in reading, writing, calculation, and basic problem-solving skills required to live an effective life, the program has been steadily attracting youth between the ages of 15 and 29.

Bravely overcoming her self-doubt, Serke enrolled in class for the first time in her life. "I couldn't think of where to even begin. Not being able to even write my name and having to rely on using my fingerprint as my signature used to be difficult and embarrassing," she says. Now, she invests her time and happily pays 60 ETB for transportation that brings her to the classroom.



"I have not missed a single session because of how important I think this opportunity is. It has made me equal with everyone. I have always been confident, but education has given me what I needed in order to feel like I am like everybody else despite my circumstances."

The Dessie literacy program is more than a place designed to help tackle youth illiteracy. The instructors are new graduates who need to gain classroom experience and practical training to jump start their careers. Kefeta hires these new teachers who then gain much needed training in teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management increasing their employability in a competitive job market.





Nur Eshete, 26, is one of the instructors who is now proficient in theoretical and practical approaches as a new teacher. He is passionate about his career. “I have seen many changes in my students. One of them had never even stepped foot in a school building. Now he can differentiate the letters and is able to write his name and has started reading.” He notes that the center also serves as a pipeline for students to enter the world of formal education.

Serke is sentimental about the investment her teachers made in her. “I didn’t even know how to hold a pen when I first came here. Our instructor went as far as holding my hand to teach me the proper way.”

This Kefeta initiated program in classrooms around Dessie has now engaged two teachers as Kefeta interns and has a student body of 70. In Dessie, education is slowly healing many layers of complex wounds.

## A Vision Restored

Asinakech Tole Kana, a 19-year-old mother of two young boys, has always depended on daily labor work in her community to make ends meet. Life was challenging, especially since she struggled with reading and writing. She was unable to use financial services, she couldn’t imagine her life other than doing labor work. Her life took a positive turn when she heard about Kefeta’s Functional Literacy sessions.

Asinakech has now made remarkable progress in reading, writing, and numeracy skills. This transformation has significantly boosted her self-confidence and communication abilities.

“Being able to read and write has greatly impacted my life. I used to feel ashamed to go to my children’s school, but now I do so with confidence. I am now able to dream bigger and even consider starting my own small business. The benefits I have gained from this program are invaluable.”

Inspired by the success of the literacy sessions, Asinakech is now eager to take advantage of other services offered by Kefeta. She is particularly interested in receiving Life Skills and Entrepreneurship training. Grateful for the opportunities provided by Kefeta, Asinakech looks forward to further improving her life and providing a better future for her children.



Kefeta | Gateway for Inclusive  
Youth Friendly Digital Solution



@Kefeta-IYA



@KefetaIYA



@KefetaIYA



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia**

Office +251 116 630 552 E-mail: info.ethiopia@amref.org  
P.O.Box 20855 Code 1000 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Web www.amref.org



facebook.com/amrefethiopia



AmrefEthiopia