



2008 - 2024

OUR STORIES

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Amref Health Africa – European Union Partnership

Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia has been implementing European Union-funded projects in various regions and districts since 2008. Through these initiatives, our organization collaborates with the Government of Ethiopia, other implementing partners, and communities to achieve lasting health changes in the country.

With support from the European Union, Amref Health Africa has worked closely with local and national partners, including the public sector, to enhance access to quality reproductive health services, raise awareness of the reproductive health needs of youth, and improve the capacity of local health workers and authorities to provide friendly and effective health services.

Implemented in diverse regions of the country such as Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and South Ethiopia, our projects demonstrate a commitment to improving healthcare access, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, women and youth empowerment, strengthening local capacities and more.

2008 – 2024

- Strengthening Pastoralist Health Care Systems in South Omo 2008 - 2011
- Putting Community First: Better Health for Pastoralist in Afar 2009 - 2013
- Sanitation Daily in Addis Ababa - 2012 - 2017
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Enhancement through Integrated Recovery Support Mechanisms (SAFE) in South Ethiopia - 2014 - 2016
- Multi Sectoral and Integrated Community Based Resilience Building in Afar - 2014 - 2016
- Access, Service and Utilization of Reproductive Health (ASURE) in South Ethiopia - 2015 - 2019
- Multi-sectoral Interventions to Improve Nutrition Security & Strengthen Resilience in South Omo - 2016- 2018
- Resilient Economy and Livelihoods (REAL) in Wolaita 2016 -2020
- Improving Livelihoods and Building Resilience (RESET II) in Afar 2016 - 2020
- Resilience Building for Sustainable Livelihoods & Transformation (RESULT) in South Omo - 2016 -2020
- Family Planning for Resilience Building (RESET Plus FP) in Amhara, Oromia & South Ethiopia - 2018 - 2021
- Scaling-up Family Planning for Resilience Building (RESET Plus FP II)- Afar, Amhara, Oromia & South Ethiopia - 2022 - 2024

Bridging the Gap and Transforming Health in Rural Ethiopia

Alemetu Betcha, a health extension worker in rural Wolaita, South Ethiopia, has been pivotal in transforming the health and well-being of women and children in her community.

Trained by Amref Health Africa, Alemetu has played a crucial role in the success of the Amref's European Union Funded RESET Family Planning services project, focusing on enhancing access to sexual and reproductive health services among rural populations. Through her efforts, Alemetu has provided crucial support to mothers, helping them access vital services and knowledge for their family's health and well-being.

Genet, a mum of two boys, like many women in her community, faced barriers to accessing essential health services due to the remote nature of her village and limited availability of healthcare facilities. But with Alemetuu's guidance and support, Genet learned about sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and the importance of keeping her children healthy. Alemetu provided her with information on how to protect her children from prevalent diseases such as malaria and other water-borne illnesses.

Health extension workers like Alemetu play a critical role in the health of mothers and children in rural areas of Southern Ethiopia. They are often the first point of contact for women who may not have easy access to healthcare facilities. These workers provide education, support, and sometimes even basic medical care, ensuring that health services reach the most vulnerable populations. Their presence in the community fosters trust and encourages women to seek help, leading to improved health outcomes for both mothers and children.





In rural areas of South Ethiopia, where healthcare infrastructure is often limited, sexual and reproductive health is crucial to women and girls. Access to these services is essential for reducing maternal and child mortality, preventing diseases, and empowering women to make informed decisions about their health and family planning services. This is especially important in regions like Wolaita, where poverty and food insecurity are prevalent, and health challenges are exacerbated by difficult living conditions.

Alemitu's role highlights the need for more trained health extension workers to support mothers in rural areas. These workers are essential in bridging the gap between healthcare providers and the community, ensuring that women and children receive the care they need. By expanding the network of trained community extension workers, more families can access health services, improving health outcomes and contributing to the overall development of rural communities in Ethiopia.





Health extension worker Alemitu gives Genet counseling on SRH/FP at her home

© Genaye E. for Amref Ethiopia



We are There for Communities in Hard-to-Reach Villages

Two out of the three villages that make up the Mego kebele in the Afambo district of the Afar region of Ethiopia are isolated, separated by Afambo Lake. Because of their isolation, the villagers had extremely limited access to basic health services such as immunizations provided by the closest health extension post.

In Adigere, one of the two remote villages, Amref Health Africa's European Union-funded Resilience Building project provided logistical and technical support for an outreach vaccination service. The outreach, organized by the district health office, was designed to reach all pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as children under five susceptible to infectious diseases.

Vaccine uptake is very low in Afar due to poor infrastructure, resulting in low immunization and nutrition screening coverage. Through partnership with EU, Amref Health Africa is making progress in health equity, especially in remote areas that are most in need of preventative care services.

Delivering outreach immunization services to rural Afar using camel transportation, crossing Abe Lake in Afambo District
© Amref Health Africa/Fantaw Seid





Building Resilient Communities and Creating Stronger Families

The pastoralist life for most women in Afar is already challenging. Hawa Abdulkadir, a 28-year-old wife and mother in Humodita Kebele in the Afambo Woreda of the Afar region was no exception.

Facing limited financial resources, living in difficult terrain, and navigating erratic weather patterns that caused frequent floods that would wipe out her home made it difficult for Hawa and her husband to make ends meet.

Added to this was the uncertainty of planning her pregnancies. The increased precariousness of being able to provide a decent life for her family compelled Hawa to seek training on how to efficiently manage her life through sound family planning practices. She enrolled in Amref Health Africa's RESET Plus family planning project where she found resources on managing her reproductive health. After carefully assessing their situation, Hawa and her husband chose Implanon NXT, a three-year birth control method.





Being able to plan her pregnancies allowed Hawa and her husband to better allocate their income, setting aside money for their children's education and healthcare. Additionally, she had the time and energy to engage in work that brought in extra income, thus increasing the family's economic resilience.

Family planning also helped Hawa manage the unpredictability of the Afar weather. By avoiding pregnancies during times of floods, the family could protect their home and ensure adequate food supply.

"We can now protect our home, and we finally have enough food to eat," Hawa says. "The ability to plan is like having a shield against the challenges nature throws at us."

Empowered Women Create Healthier and Resilient Community

In the dramatic landscape of Wolaita, in South Ethiopia, with its rolling hills, rocky terrains, and meandering roads, a remarkable transformation is taking place. In Badewoyde Kebele, a small community in Wolaita, 50 women have come together to form, women economic group (WEG) that aimed at empowering women through financial independence and enterprise management training.

One of these women is Adanech Mogiso. By borrowing from the savings of the group, Adanech was able to start her own shop, a venture that not only supports her family but also contributes to the local economy. This initiative is more than just a financial opportunity; it is a lifeline that enhances the health and well-being of mothers and children in the community.

Adanech Mogiso Moja now runs a shop at a local centre because of savings from the group.

Empowering rural women financially has profound implications for access to healthcare services. In regions like Southern Ethiopia, financial independence can significantly impact health outcomes. Women like Adanech, who can generate their own income, are better positioned to afford healthcare services for themselves and their children. This economic empowerment translates directly into improved maternal and child health, reducing the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth and ensuring that children receive the necessary care and nutrition for healthy development.



The Badewoyde Kebele's WEG is a beacon of hope in this picturesque yet challenging environment. The rocky hills and winding roads of their village symbolize the obstacles these women face and overcome. By fostering a sense of community and mutual support, the savings group enhances financial stability and promotes health and well-being.

In the larger context of Southern Ethiopia, empowering women through financial independence is a critical step towards achieving broader health goals. Women who control their own resources are more likely to prioritize healthcare, family planning, education, and nutrition for their families, leading to a ripple effect that benefits the entire community.

Initiatives like the Badewoyde Kebele's WEG are essential. They provide women with the tools to overcome economic barriers, ensuring that the health needs of mothers and children are met. Empowering rural women is not just about financial independence; it is about fostering a healthier, more resilient community for generations to come.



Youth Friendly Corners at Health Centers: Changing How Youth Seek and Receive Reproductive Health Services

“ I lacked the ability to deal with issues considered taboo in our community, but knew that not addressing them was having adverse effects on many lives.

Those are the sentiments of Mekdes Fesseha, a young health worker at Sikela Health Center in Arbaminch town in South Ethiopia. Like her counterparts, she struggled to help young people’s need for solid information on sexual reproductive health issues delivered without judgment and in safe spaces.

Young women were especially intimidated by social mores that prevented them from seeking counsel on first sexual encounters, menstruation, and pregnancy. It was hard for Mekdes to watch young women skip school or, worse, drop out because of menstruation-related stress and pregnancy.

So, when she heard about a special health worker training program designed to deliver sexual and reproductive services specifically for young people, Mekdes jumped on the opportunity. The training, Access, Service, and Utilization of Reproductive Health Service (ASURE) is a partnership between Amref Health Africa and the European Union. It provides comprehensive reproductive health services for young people in the newly-constructed Youth Friendly Service Corner at the local health center.

“For me, the training was an eye-opener. It helped me change the way I perform my job as a health worker who attends to young people,” says Mekdes.

The Youth Friendly Service (YFS) corner was designed to provide an inviting and dignified environment for young people to seek sexual reproductive health services. “Previously, these essential services for young people were provided by adults in the outpatient department of the health center,” continues Mekdes. “Only a few young women would come; and those who did would immediately feel conscious about being in waiting rooms full of adults. They did not want to attract attention and be noticed at all.”

With the establishment of the corner, however, the number of young people visiting the corner has increased to an average of 20 a day, mainly girls. Mekdes has happily noticed the significant impact the corner has made on the lives of young people. “All it took to help them was creating a welcoming and friendly environment, and then raising awareness about the services available,” she says. “Now they can openly talk about their needs and seek advice, especially the girls. Change is really happening!”

With financial support from the European Union, the ASURE project has constructed 48 fully equipped youth-friendly service corners. The project also trained 1200 health workers, who have already been deployed in several YFS corners and health centers where sexual reproductive health services are in high demand.



Health worker Mekides Fesseha on duty providing SRH services at a Youth Friendly Service corner, Sikila Health Center, Arbaminch

©Amref Health Africa/Kenaw G.

Changing Communities' Lives Through Provision of Clean Water

Mothers and daughters in Eyeledi kebele, Dewe woreda in Afar carry the burden of collecting water from the closest river for cooking, washing, and cleaning. This task is made more arduous due to the harsh, arid terrain of Afar which necessitates several trips on foot a day, often long distances.

The scarcity of clean, easily accessible water disproportionately impacts women, girls, and children. The risk of traveling long distances by themselves makes women vulnerable; girls are often forced to drop out of school to help their mothers with household chores; and lack of sanitation makes children vulnerable to preventable communicable diseases. Sometimes conflict flares up between communities vying for access to clean water.

Before 2018, Fatuma Dawud and her two daughters aged four and eight were used to accommodating disruptions in their lives due to little access to clean water. With the support of the European Union-funded **Resilience Building and Creation of Economic Opportunities in Ethiopia** project, however, a new, game-changing solar-powered water scheme in Dewe was constructed and handed over to the communities in Eyeledi kebele.

The key objective of the project was to reduce the vulnerability of pastoralist communities to water-borne diseases by providing them with improved quality and access to safe water and sanitation facilities. Today, it serves 3,200 people in the kebele, with the capacity to provide over 200,000 liters of water per day. Fatuma's family was changed indelibly.





“ We no longer go to the river or travel long distances to fetch unclean water. Instead, open a tap near our home,” Fatuma says. “As a mother, I know the pain of not having water at home. We drink clean water. We wash our children and keep ourselves clean regularly.

For pastoralists whose primary source of income is cattle, access to clean water has elevated their livelihood. “Our goats and camels drink clean water as well from the trough built at a closer distance from the pump. It’s Allah’s blessing!”



A boy shepherd getting his cattle to drink water from the water trough built for livestock of Eyeledi community in Afar
© Amref Health Africa/Kenaw G





*Fatuma Dawud bathing her daughter from the water source constructed by Amref with funding from EU
© Amref Health Africa/Kenaw G.*

Securing Livelihoods of Young People through Income-Generating Activities

Samson, 25, who resides in Areka town of Wolaita zone in southern Ethiopia, never imagined himself as a business owner. After his father passed away when he was a child, his mother struggled to support the family. Samson managed to complete high school but could not find employment in his small village.



Samson with female members of SMART WASH Kiosk
© Amref Health Africa/Wolaita Field Office

After five challenging years, he moved to Areka town in hopes of better opportunities. However, he was soon worn down by working as a daily laborer. Finally, out of desperation, he registered as 'unemployed' at a local government office. His last hope was to secure a job provided by the district job creation office.

Samson's break came when he connected with Amref Health Africa's REAL project, funded by the European Union. REAL launched Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) marketing to help young people generate income by selling sanitation services. The project, in collaboration with the district job-creation office, rolled out entrepreneurship training along with sexual reproductive health workshops. Samson was among the trainees and was later selected to lead a group of eight members (four females and four males) to start a small business.



Customers of SMART WASH Kiosk having coffee and spending time
© Amref Health Africa/Wolaita Field Office

There were several seminal learning moments for Samson as he delved deeper into being an entrepreneur. While Amref Health Africa constructed the WASH Kiosks for young people, each member of Samson's team was required to save money to invest in their business. Since the savings were inefficient, Amref Health Africa linked the group to a local microfinance institute, which provided them with a 35,000 ETB loan. Samson struggled with the concept of a loan. "I was initially angry when I learned this was money we would have to pay back. I wanted it to be a charity. I even considered dissolving the group," he remembers.

The REAL project, similar to other Amref projects, is centered on community based, sustainable approaches. This meant collaboration with local government authorities to equip and empower the youth through a consultative process. Samson raised his concerns about the loan in one session. "It took me a long time to believe that our group could become profitable enough to pay the loan and have regular earnings. It required us to believe in ourselves. But slowly I started to believe that things would change day by day for the better," Samson says.

The group embraced this new ethos. They set up a fee structure to use the WASH Kiosks. They also started serving coffee at a café attached to the Kiosk and charging to show DSTV. The work paid off. The enterprise began making money; so much so that Samson and his business partners managed to pay off their loan. "This inspired us to work harder towards growing our business and improving our lives. I am grateful to be able to see my potential," he says.

The European Union's partnership has sparked new hope for young people in Wolaita who are thriving under a new way of thinking that they are capable of innovation and self-reliant given the opportunity.

Clean Water Still Flowing for Communities Who Once Drank from a River



A woman in Doiso who was once fetching water from Bezo river, now has access to safe and clean water
© Amref Health Africa/Project staff

One of the many harsh everyday realities faced by the residents of the remote village of Doiso kebele in South Omo was having to source their drinking water from the unclean Bezo River. Since animals also share this water resource, the community was rife with water-borne diseases.

The water from the river was also used for cooking and doing household chores, so community members would have to bear the exhaustion and frustration of making the trek to the river bank several times a day early in the mornings before the scorching heat, and again in the evenings when the temperature was more bearable. It was a two-hour, one-way trip a long way to travel for water polluted by animal waste.

To address this dire situation, the European Union funded Amref Health Africa's **Strengthening Pastoralist Health Care Systems** project, designed to bring clean water to communities.

Gizachew Menge, the project manager responsible for ensuring quality control of the fast-tracked well water drilling, camped in the heat in rural Doiso to stay on top of the project. "It was very disturbing to see the communities share water with their cattle, and I could not wait to see the completed infrastructure so communities can enjoy clean water for the first time," he says.

This water project was the biggest breakthrough for the Doiso community, and provided long-sought relief. Amref Health Africa implemented its very first EU- funded **Strengthening Pastoralist Health Care Systems** in remote districts of South Omo in 2008.

The water in Doiso still flows, ensuring no one drinks from the Bezo River anymore.



*Gizachew Menge, Amref Project Manager at Doiso
© Amref Health Africa/Project staff*





Pay it Forward: An Advocate for Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

No one is more surprised by the current state of his life than Muzeyen Abdella himself. After a rocky childhood where his father died, he found himself unemployed and living on the streets when he was twenty-two.

Muzeyen recalls that chapter of his life where he felt particularly open to various addictions and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) challenges.

Despite numerous obstacles, Muzeyen returned to school to pursue his education and eventually obtained his degree in management from Arbaminch University in 2018.

His travails have made Muzeyen a passionate advocate of SRH rights, particularly for vulnerable youth. He is one of the young people trained on life-skills and sexual and reproductive health by ASURE: **Access, Service and Utilization of Reproductive Health Service**, an Amref Health Africa project supported by the European Union.

Muzeyen attests that the SHR trainings changed his outlook in many ways. "They were game changers," Muzeyen remarks. "Access to the training has left a mark in my life and how I lead it. Now, I lead a healthy lifestyle. My mission is to pass down this fortune to young people."

Muzeyen heads the Youth-Friendly Service corner constructed by Amref Health Africa at Arbaminch Youth Center. There, he is a volunteer counselor, especially focusing on street boys and girls.

Muzeyen's advocacy work is fueled every time he talks to young people on the streets or in school. He is keen on raising awareness about sexually transmitted diseases

prevention, family planning options, and teenage pregnancy. “I often talk to shoe-shine boys, and girls who sell vegetables and fruits on the street and try my best to motivate them. I want to help them break the chain of poverty and desperation.”

The youth corner where Muzeyen is a leader encourages the youth to seek and demand SRH services without fear or shame. He elaborates:



*Muzeyen educating his fellow young people about SRH
©Amref Health Africa/ Project staff*

“

There is no room to openly discuss SRH related problems at home, in schools, in workplaces, or in the community at large. We are afraid to talk about these issues with our parents and senior family members. The girls hesitate to speak about their first menstruation, and the boys hide the sexually transmitted infections they may have caught. The YFS corner and the peer learning are very useful platforms that have changed norms and broken taboos.

During its implementation period (2015-2019), the ASURE project reached over 80,000 adolescents and youths (52% females) with SRH services. Utilization of youth-friendly SRH services increased from 24% to 90% in the intervention areas. “We just needed someone to show us the way,” says Muzeyen.

Public Sanitation Facility – Our Health, Our Livelihood

Meskerem Mazoria in Kirkos Sub-city of Addis Ababa is a bustling business area teeming with cafeterias, local markets, restaurants, and shops. Despite a lot of foot traffic, there was one critical gap: lack of public latrines.



Yisak Alemayehu lives around Meskerem Mazoria. For him and many residents in the area, lack of access to public latrines has always been an unresolved challenge. This, he believes, led many to the practice of open defecation, which becomes a breeding ground for recurring diarrhea among children and the elderly. "We would catch diarrhea so easily. Our children in particular used to suffer. It was common for us to crowd health centers and hospitals," Yisak says.

Amref Health Africa's **Sanitation Daily** project supported by the European Union assessed the need and constructed a public sanitation facility with six shower rooms and toilets to serve the Meskerem Mazoria community. But there was an added benefit besides improved health and changed social behavior: the facility also offered employment opportunities for young people.



Yisak was trained to run the fee-based public sanitation project. "This is our health. For us, the young people who benefit from the income generated, it is also our livelihood. We were all unemployed, but now we can strive for self-reliance. We earn a total of ETB 5,000 per month that we share among our members."

During its five-year implementation period (2012-2017), the Sanitation Daily project reached more than 55,000 people by building 41 communal latrines and 50 institutional latrines in communities, schools, and health centers.

*Sanitation facility built by Amref Health Africa,
Meskerem Mazoria, Kiroks Subcity, Addis Ababa
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