



A girl attending WASH awareness raising event, Afar region

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Note from Country Director

With our new strategy launched in 2018, Amref Health Africa's staffs have been engaged in various implementations and partnerships activities during the year. Implementing our strategy has improved our program interventions and operations towards becoming a more effective and efficient organization. Our publication, the 2018 'Amref at a Glance' (<https://bit.ly/2NPifVV>), is one of our highlights that reflects our vision, strategies and success stories.

Complementing our publication in this newsletter, we share our experiences strengthening the human resources for health challenges in Gambella region, with the start-up of the midwifery program. I was very excited to be part of our senior management team to visit the Gambella Teacher's Education College in June 2018 and to have the opportunity to interact with the leaders of this initiative and the young women enrolled in the midwifery program – this is inspiring and commits us to do more as an organization! Our strategic plan is designed and developed around women and children being the center of our activities; you will find our work supporting youth services in Arbaminch, and our nationwide contribution towards fistula elimination through our clinical outreach program.

Our organization has also launched a new cultural change initiative across all its country programs through an analysis of critical behaviors we want to have more and behaviors we want to have less (See our formula for success on the Photo Gallery section).

Leadership is one of the value we want to encourage in our organization and make it part of our culture – you will find the engaging story of one of our young leaders, Betebebe Mulugeta, and his leadership in our organization. We look forward in strengthening our engagement with our staffs, our government and non-government partners, and our

Misrak Makonnen, Country Director

Youth Friendly Corner at Health Center Changes the Usual Trend in Getting Reproductive Health Services

Mekdes Fesseha, 29, is a young health worker at Sikela Health Center in Arbaminch town, in SNNPR. She was one of the many health workers who received youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services delivery training rolled out by Access, Service and Utilization of Reproductive Health Service (ASURE) project of Amref Health Africa. She has been working at the Youth Friendly Service Corner (YFS), which was initiated and constructed by Amref Health Africa to help provide comprehensive reproductive health services for young people.

Mekdes, with several of her fellow health workers, participated in the 'Youth Friendly Service' training tailored as youth focused in July 2017. "I had little knowledge and skills to reach out specifically the youth with the necessary sexual reproductive health services including the ability to deal with issues which, considered as taboo, often go unsaid, but would adversely affect the lives of many. For me, the training was such an eye opener that it helped me change the way I perform my job as a health worker who attends to young people," Mekdes says.

Most important of all is the YFS corner that is constructed and equipped by Amref Health Africa has changed the day to day activities and services for the youth. The corner brings many young people to the sexual reproductive health services provided. "Before the corner was set up, these services were given with adults in the outpatient department (OPD). Only a few young women would come for sexual reproductive health related problems. Even if they come, they would not feel comfortable when they found themselves among the adults or other patients whosoever in the waiting room. They did not want to be noticed at all," Mekdes remembers.

Young people experience several sexual reproductive health related issues related to first sexual encounter, menstruation and pregnancy due to lack of knowledge and information on these critical moments of their growth for example, some may have heard nothing about menstruation and how pregnancy happens and may get shocked with the incidence; some may even drop out of school because of the shocks linked to this, and many more. Mekdes says this is why young people should receive special attention and such a separate corner dedicated for them gives them a safe space.



School girls playing game at Sikela Health Center Youth Friendly Service Corner, Arbaminch, SNNPR

Describing the changes since the YFS corner started providing services in Sikela Health Center, Mekdes states "The number of young people who come to the center for the service has increased. On average around 20 young people, mainly girls, come to the corner every day. There is a huge boost week after week. They even begin to demand more related health services. They share with us their sexual and reproductive health related needs and concerns loud and openly. We have at the corner various games for the youth to play and spare time. We have been supporting students who dropped out schools because of unintended pregnancy, menstruation related stress and frustration and working to change this situation. Change is really happening," says Mekdes.

ASURE has equipped the youth corner at Sikela Health Center with facilities that help create a welcoming environment and friendly setting for the young people. The sexual reproductive health services are given integrated with other health services. "It doesn't matter for what kind of health service the youth have come; it could be for malaria or else, based on the training I gained, I ask them if they have any SRH related concerns and encourage them to share. I try to make them feel comfortable to speak their mind. This is how we integrate SRH services with other health problems," Mekdes noted.

Mekdes is very happy to work at the center and help address young girls' and boys' concerns. "I can always see how worried they are when it comes to facing SRH problems; how stressful time they undergo. That is my day-to-day experience with them. All what it takes to help them is making a welcoming and friendly environment and service available. With the help of Amref Health Africa we have made this possible. I am happy that I am helping them on this." Mekdes is confident and optimistic that the service would be scaled up and bring about many more positive changes in many places in the region.

Launched in December 2014, with financial support from European Union through Amref Health Africa in Italy, ASURE project has to-date constructed 44 youth friendly service corners, of which 34 are fully equipped and functional. The project has also trained 170 health workers, who have already been deployed in several YFS corners and health centers where sexual reproductive health services are highly demanded. Amref Health Africa has achieved this success in close collaboration with relevant government sectors at all levels in the region.



A health worker on duty giving reproductive health service at Youth Friendly Service Corner, Sikela Health Center, Arbaminch, SNNPR

“My Pain Has Gone”: Ending Obstetric Fistula through Patient Identification

Alem Sifab, 16, lives in Kalala worda, Wollo, Amhara Regional State. She was pregnant and expecting a healthy baby. When the time came for her to deliver, her labor lasted several days. Finally she was taken to a health center, and gave birth to a stillborn baby. As a result of a difficult and prolonged labor, Alem developed an obstetric fistula. She began to leak urine. During Amref Health Africa fistula identification campaign conducted in collaboration with Bahirdar Hamline Fistula Center and South Wollo Zone health offices, she was identified as one of fistula patient in her area.

Describing her situation in her own words, Alem said:

I was a 12 years old girl when I got married. I gave birth to my first child at the age of 16. I underwent and endured a prolonged labor, which took three days. My labor showed no progress. I was then taken to nearby health center but it was late. I finally gave birth to a stillborn baby. I later recognized I began to leak my urine. I learnt from health care providers that it was the prolong labor that caused this. I was advised to go to Addis Ababa to get better treatment. I couldn't manage to travel to Addis Abeba due to family and financial issues.

I suffered from this tragedy for almost eight months until one day a health extension worker, who knew my condition, came to my house with a good news. It was really the brightest day in my life.



Alem Sifab at rehabilitation center after surgery,
Bahirdar, Amhara region
© Amref Health Africa/Abeba M.

The health worker told me that there is an organization called Amref Health Africa, which provides an outreach service to those who suffer obstetric fistula. She explained to me the details, “This organization would arrange everything to help you get treatment, covering your transport cost and other. You will just be ready to go to Kelela Health Facility where the service would be given to patients like you.”

Not long after hearing this news, Alem was able to attend the first screening at Kelela Health center and travel to Bahirdar Fistula Center where she received the treatment, which involved surgery. Amref Health Africa made all the necessary arrangement and paid for her transportation to Bahirdar.

Her surgery went well and her injury has gone. Alem is grateful that the pain she went through has now gone. “Thanks to Amref Health Africa and the Government, I am now free from the burden of the obstetric fistula and associated social problems; I can attend any family and community gathering without fear and embarrassment as I do not leak urine anymore,” Alem said.

[Recent study shows that there are between 36,000 and 39,000 women living with fistula in Ethiopia, and over 3,000 additional new cases occur each year .]

Alem is receiving a training from the rehabilitation center she is in. “The center provides me with a training based on my interest and I have already chosen a business area I would like to engage in. I hope that I will get the skill I need and I will start my own business after I get back home,” she said. Alem promised to share with her community the dire experience she went through as well as what she has benefited from Amref Health Africa’s Fistula Identification and Treatment Program. She also vowed to support others in connecting themselves to the treatment center and get the support she has obtained.

Recent study shows that there are between 36,000 and 39,000 women living with fistula in Ethiopia, and over 3,000 additional new cases occur each year . The Federal Ministry of Ethiopia launched a national action plan to eliminate obstetric fistula by 2020. Amref Health Africa through its Clinical Specialist Outreach project, has been playing instrumental role by supporting this government initiative. In 2018, the project has managed to identify and to assist in the treatment of 42 fistula cases in Benshangul Gumuz, Amhara, Oromia and Afar regions.

Bringing Midwifery Training Program Close to the Community in Gambella

Amref Health Africa, aligning with the Government of Ethiopia's priority and the community's needs, works to produce competent mid-level health workforce through its support of the midwifery training and the national Health Extension Program (HEP) in partnership with the Ministry of Health Human Resources Development Directorate.

Amref Health Africa invests in human resources for health and works to ensure tomorrow's midwives acquire the skills and knowledge they need.

The midwifery training program at the Teachers Education and Health Science College in Gambella is one of the initiatives Amref Health Africa has been supporting as part of its health system strengthening efforts in Ethiopia's developing regions. The program enrolled forty midwifery students for the first time in Gambella for a three year full scale training, supported by Amref Health Africa through funding from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK). Kun Wal, 32, is an instructor at the midwifery training program in the Gambella Teachers Education and Health Science College. When the program launched in November 2017, Kun became the coordinator of the program and has been involved since then.

"We didn't have a midwifery training program merely because we lacked the technical and financial capacity to open despite our huge need for skilled birth attendant in the region. The only option we had was sending students out to Arbaminch Health Science College to attend the 'Accelerated Midwifery Training Program,' which was also supported by Amref Health Africa. Through this program, we were not able to get the workforce we needed as many dropped out and came-

back home. Now, thanks to Amref Health Africa's support, we have been able to open the program close to the community where our students belong to and live with, and where they face no language barrier as they pursue their training," said Kun.

Amref Health Africa strongly believes the program would contribute much to address the maternal and child health needs of the region, among the highest in the country. In Gambella region eight out of 100 children died before reaching five years old. Only 47% deliveries were attended by skilled health workers, among the least in the country (EDHS, 2016).



After completing their program, students are expected to join the scarce health workforce and help save lives in every corner of the region.

"Our students are enthusiastic to learn and become skilled health worker. I am full of hopes that upon finishing their program, they will go back to the community where they have come from. As they graduate after two years, I hope to stand before them and say these my words, 'you are from the community, and you should go to the community and serve your people, mothers and children who are in need of your service most,'" Kun noted.

As part of its commitment in improving maternal, newborn and child health in the developing regions, Amref Health Africa invests in human resources for health and works to ensure tomorrow's midwives acquire the skills and knowledge they need to provide a skilled care for pregnant mothers and newborn babies in Gambella region.

Through the support of GSK, the organization has initiated similar programs in other developing regions in the country. For the last three years of its engagement and support, it has graduated more than 200 midwives. Currently, the organization supports the training of more than 150 midwives in Gambella, Afar and Benshangule-Gumuz regions.



Kun Wal, Midwifery Training Program Coordinator, at his office, Gambella Teachers and Health Science College.

“I have Come from the Community, and I Will Go Back to the Community and Serve”



Ayachyol, a midwifery student supported by Amref Health Africa at Gambella Teachers and Health Science College.
©Amref Health Africa/Kenaw G

Ayachyol, 23, is one of the midwifery students at the Gambella Teachers Education and Health Science College. After graduating from high school, she was looking for a training opportunity that could help her become a health worker in her region.

Aware that a midwifery program would be opened in Gambella town by the Gambella Regional Health Bureau with the support of Amref Health Africa, she applied for entry and succeeded in joining the program. Ayachyol knows well Gambella is one of the regions in Ethiopia where there is the highest maternal and child health needs, one of which is the lack of skilled birth attendants.

“I am lucky to have become one of the first students of the midwifery training program in this college. Amref Health Africa supports the program and provides us with all what is needed,” she said with smiles on her face.

It has been just ten months since Ayachyol joined the midwifery program. With two more years to go, she has already acquired some basic skills she will be able to apply when assigned among the rural communities. “I can’t wait to finish my training and go out there in my community and help,” said Ayachyol, “One can go out and see how mothers are suffering from pregnancy related challenges in our region. It really touches anyone.” The communities in Gambella live in places where there is no road and transportation, adequate health facilities and skilled health workers to address the health needs of mothers and children, who are the most vulnerable.

Ayachyol is one of tomorrow’s midwives Amref Health Africa is investing on as part of its support to strengthen the health workforce in Gambella region. “My aspiration is to become a well-trained and skilled midwife who can in any circumstances strive to save lives. No matter how far the village I might be assigned to work, I want to be part of the solution of addressing mothers and children’s health challenges in my region. I have come from the community, and I will go back to the community,” said Ayachyol.

Ethiopia has a shortage of health workers, underlining the need to expand training particularly in developing regions. Gambella region has 52 midwives for half a million people; one midwife covering 10000 population, a huge shortfall compared to other regions in the country (FMOH Health and Health Related Indicators, 2017). Amref Health Africa has been at the forefront in bridging this gap. Currently, the organization supports more than 100 midwifery trainees in Gambella, Afar and Benshangule-Gumuz regions through its GSK human resource for health project.



Midwifery students going to class, Gambella Teachers and Health Science College.
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Betebebu Mulugeta at the YALI Regional Leadership Center, Nairobi, Kenya

The Future Leaders of Amref Health Africa: Paving the Road for Change

Betebebu Mulugeta, a young project officer at Amref Health Africa's field office in Arbaminch, was one of the 2018 fellow of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), a month-long leadership training initiative. This program, initiated by former president of USA, Barack Obama, and based at the YALI Regional Leadership Center in Nairobi, Kenya, aims to equip young people with the skills and tools to add greater value to society, business and the public sector. Betebebu is now certified as Young Leader Committed to Transforming Africa.

Betebebu's leadership credentials, his commitment to personal development, and his desire to make a difference in Ethiopia, paved his road for the YALI, as noted in the letter of award he received from the program. He attested this as he interacted with more than 80 fellow trainees representing various nations during his participation in the program. Betebebu demonstrated his enthusiasm and commitment to becoming one of the next generation of innovative leaders in Africa. His experiences at Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia, where he works as a project officer for the Access, Service and Utilization of Reproductive Health (ASURE) Project for three years, highly contributed to his success in getting this opportunity.

"When I applied, I knew it would be very competitive. But the fact that I have been working for Amref Health Africa, which works with the most isolated African communities to achieve lasting health change, gave me the confidence to make the bold step and apply," Betebebu said. His experience working in a health project where 'team leadership' is appreciated and his contribution to get this off the ground helped him be selected as a candidate.

The most important leadership role Betebebu delivers in his project is influencing project team members to become active players for better performance in providing beneficiaries with quality services. He describes his contributions and personal initiatives in the project day-to-day activities saying, "I always try to display high level of self-motivation and commitment to execute my responsibilities for better project outcomes. Through coaching and facilitating on-job training, I also push and help my colleagues to unlock their potential and grow so that they could become leaders and change makers within Amref Health Africa and beyond. I do all my best to create an enjoyable work environment and sustain one team spirit."

Betebebu advises his colleagues to see themselves as leaders. "We are all leaders. Everyone in Amref Health Africa has to see himself/herself as a leader regardless of his/her position and status within the organization." This begins with 'recognizing strong and weak sides, forming positive attitudes, and being open to learn from others,' he noted as these values clearly align with the new Amref Health Africa cultural change initiative.

Betebebu used YALI as a platform not only to network and interact with several young African leaders, through which boosted his personal development, but also to exploit it as a great opportunity to increase Amref Health Africa's visibility by sharing the learnings and successes of the ASURE Project, becoming an ambassador for Amref Health Africa. His experience has inspired all other staffs to explore similar opportunities and build their capacities to provide better services for communities.

Betebebu aspires to establish a leadership training program at youth centers in Arbaminch town and contribute in developing innovative and visionary young peoples in Ethiopia. Amref Health Africa is proud to have leaders such as Betebebu for bringing lasting health changes in Ethiopia.



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"We are all leaders. Everyone in Amref Health Africa has to see himself/herself as a leader regardless of his/her position and status within the organization."



AFRICA HEALTH AGENDA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 5-7 March 2019 | Kigali, Rwanda

2030 Now: Multi-sectoral Action to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Africa

Access • Quality • Health Financing • Accountability

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BACKGROUND

The Africa Health Agenda International Conference (AHAIC) is a biennial conference convened by Amref Health Africa, the largest international health development NGO in Africa. AHAIC is an opportunity to bring together stakeholders from across sectors and around the world to discuss challenges and opportunities to improving health in Africa.

While service delivery and total health expenditure have expanded rapidly in Africa, access to safe, affordable and quality health care and advanced technologies remains a challenge. Thus, many lives continue to be lost to preventable diseases and treatable illnesses in Africa. Many countries still face high levels of child and maternal mortality, malnutrition is still persistent across the region, and most health systems are not able to effectively deal with epidemics and the growing burden of chronic diseases. In fact, 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have yet to achieve life expectancies at birth of 55 years, the global average attained half a century ago. And the top 20 countries with the lowest life expectancy at birth – less than 60 years – are in Africa.



The 2017 AHAIC conference, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together over 1000 stakeholders, including Ministers of Health, private sector leaders and heads of organisations, to discuss systems and innovations needed to enable Africa to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

2019 CONFERENCE

The 2019 AHAIC conference, set to take place in Kigali, Rwanda from 5-7 March 2019, promises to be the biggest and best yet. The conference will convene policymakers, private sector leaders, researchers, advocates, journalists and young people to discuss how to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) in Africa. It will be an opportunity to assess where we are, evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learnt, and collectively chart a course forward. Specifically, the conference will focus on innovative ideas and multi-sectoral approaches to:

Increasing **access** to health care services and advanced technologies in Africa, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, including people displaced by conflict.

Improving **quality** to ensure that all health interventions meet expected outcomes and are safe.

Establishing mechanisms to ensure sustainable **financing** so that the use of health services does not cause financial hardship.

Strengthening **accountability** measures to enhance health system performance, leadership and return on health care investments.

Register Now at: <https://ahaic.org/registration/>

Photo Gallery

Happy Ethiopian New Year 2011!



Senior Management Team Visit to South Omo and Gambella Field Offices, 2018



Women Race 2018 Amref Country Office's Participation



Amref Health Africa Culture Change Launch Event, 2018

Addressing real community needs³ + Strong leadership² + Attract & retain the best expertise x 2 + Building partnerships with key stakeholders + Collaboration/One team + Committed, dedicated & motivated people + Conducive working environment + Ethical & transparent + Innovation + Quality + Training & development

Lack of accountability & responsibility³ + Favouritism & discrimination² + Ineffective systems & procedures x 2 + Bureaucracy + Burnout + Fear & intimidation + Negative attitudes + Non-compliance (to governance) + Non-responsive & slow to act + Politics, backstabbing & gossip + Poor communication



Amref Formula for Success: Top-line Enablers and Bottom-line Disablers

Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia ☎ : +251-116 627 851 @ : info.ethiopia@amref.org 📠 : 20855 code 1000, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

🌐 : www.amref.org

🐦 : @AmrefEthiopia

📘 : facebook.com/AMREFETHIOPIA/

Writing and Editorial: Kenaw Gebreselassie, Misrak Makonnen
Design and Layout: Milkias Abebe, Intern Graphic Designer
GalleryPhotos: Kenaw Gebreselassie