

## Child to Child (CtC) approach for school readiness

### Issue

Ethiopia has made significant progress on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in last couple of years which is largely attributable to UNICEF's advocacy and support towards the development of the national ECCE policy framework and operational strategy, the expansion of non-formal school readiness programmes such as the Child-to-Child (CtC) approach for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children as well as the establishment of "O" classes attached to the primary schools. As a result, national ECCE GER (4 to 6 year olds) has increased from 5.6 per cent in 2009/10 to 26.1 per cent in 2012/13 with a contribution of 16.1 per cent through "O" class and 3.8 per cent through CtC programme.

### National Strategy

Child-to-Child (CtC) approach for school readiness is one of the four pillar of national ECCE policy framework of Ethiopia and one of the most promising approaches to provide cost effective and efficient interventions especially for marginalized or deprived populations. The overall goal of CtC approach is to increase all the three dimensions of the school readiness: the child's readiness for school, the families/communities readiness to send to and support their children in school and the schools' readiness to receive the child and foster optimal learning environments for these young students. In addition CtC aims to increase on-time enrolment of young children in primary school and prepares them to begin formal school with a strong foundation in language, early literacy and numeracy, as well as social and emotional skills required for learning and establishing positive attitude towards learning.

### UNICEF's Contribution

As a way of seeking solutions to expand access to early learning opportunities and getting children ready for school, with technical and financial support from UNICE and under the leadership of Ministry of Education and respective Regional Education Bureau (REB), the CtC approach was piloted in three regions: Harari, Oromia and Tigray in 2008-2009. CtC approach is centred on training and deploying older children of grades 5 to 6 to facilitate regular learning interactions with pre-school aged children in their neighbourhood

Major CtC interventions included advocacy and social mobilization to popularize the approach among parents, community members and teachers, and to promote on-time school enrolment. Education, play and recreational materials to facilitate development of pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills among pre-school children were developed and distributed. In order for effective facilitation of CtC programme, teachers and young facilitators guide were developed and distributed to all facilitating teachers and young facilitators. Different story books that help children's numeracy & literacy skills and activity sheets etc. were developed and distributed to all children. School teachers were trained in child-centred pedagogy to support and mentor young facilitators as they carry out CtC in their community as well as to promote schools readiness for new entrants. The complete CtC programme was conducted over a 36 week period.

## Scaling-up/Achievements

Following the pilot in three regions, the CtC approach was and later expanded to another four regions - Amhara, Somali, SNNPR and Benishangul-Gumuz - with financial and technical support from UNICEF. To date, the CtC approach has been implemented in communities around 1,062 primary schools, in UNICEF supported woredas, in seven regions and 2,254 primary schools, outside UNICEF woredas, initiated by respective Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) benefiting over 292,000 young children. Despite all the limitations in the overall provision of ECCE in Ethiopia, there is a general consensus that 'getting ready for school' through the CtC approach could significantly boost cognitive, academic and socio-emotional outcomes for pre-primary aged young children.

## Lesson learned

The recent CtC impact evaluation conducted by the University of Toronto, Canada in March 2014 shows a significant impact on child development and school readiness skills related to literacy, numeracy, task persistence and socio-emotional skill among the children participating in CtC school readiness programme compared to those who didn't participate. Children in the school at grade one who went through the CtC programme are performing better than other children. Through the programme, children learned to communicate, express themselves and ask questions, were less afraid of school, had friends when they started school, knew the school rules, were more disciplined and motivated, and were more interested in starting primary school. The CtC programme appears to have an impact on children's success in school, in both the short and medium-term, including in the areas of on-time enrolment, academic achievement and dropout.

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