

Sixty-Seven Schools within A Hundred Days

Written by Kesete Ghebrehiwot



Governments can chart out both short and long-term strategic plans, however, no matter how great the plans are nothing can be achieved without the full participation and cooperation of communities. The opportunity provided to the people of Eritrea, to be involved in the all-round developmental programs of the country, has enabled them to register numerous marvelous achievements. In this connection, the Ministry of Education, inline with the Government's policy, charted out a program, Rapid Result Initiative (RRI), for the construction of sixty-seven schools throughout the country within 100 days using community participation.

According to the RRI program the plan was to establish 10 schools in the Northern Red Sea region, 13 in Anseba, 19 in Gash Barka, 18 in Debub, 4 in Southern Red Sea, and 3 in the Central regions. However, one may pose a question as to implementation of the plan and its progress to date.

The plan may seem very ambitious at the beginning, but an end term evaluation workshop on the construction of schools through community participation (CP) that was held on October 30th, 2009 at the hall of National Confederation of Eritrean Workers has concluded that it is in fact very doable.



At the launch of the program, each region assigned limited range of time for the construction of the varied schools. Though there were minimal delays due to shortage of water in some places, flood and hostile climatic conditions in other places, it was disclosed at the workshop that commendable achievements have been registered. This only proved that if these communities are mobilized and organized properly then they can achieve even greater accomplishments. Their enduring commitment to the program even amidst hostile climatic conditions attested to this fact. The communities assigned some members for the completion of the construction in

Sixty-Seven Schools within A Hundred Days

Written by Kesete Ghebrehiwot

due time to cope with their farming and other activities.

During the occasion, representatives from the six regions presented the progress report of the construction activities of each region. Most of the schools are at the completion stage while some have been fully completed. The presentation proved that the RRI program was very successful despite all the unforeseen barriers that were encountered during the process. Had there not been any challenges then it was clear that the result would have been beyond everyone's expectations.

In the



speech he gave at the occasion, the Minister of Education, Mr. Semere Rusom, said that the selection of sites for the construction of the schools in the most remote areas of the country was based on the choice of the local people, which is in accordance with the government's policy of providing equal access to education throughout the country. In community-based development activities the sense of ownership for the projects is considered as the primary vehicle for accelerating the job and achieving a sustainable outcome. Thus, the very success of the project lies on the people's sense of ownership that was mentioned as the tenet of the projects in each region. In this regard Mr. Semere said: "We have highly organized communities and they have done a marvelous job. Together with the government they are building their own future."

Throughout the presentation one could understand the eagerness of the communities to send their children to schools; for some schools have already started to give services even before the completion of the construction. This makes the RRI a workable and timely approach introduced to give broader access to education in the remote parts of the country and it has proven to be a milestone for the implementation of such programs in the future.



The representatives of the six regions and the participants of the workshop reached a common consensus that community-based projects have to be implemented in suitable season (not to clash with other basic economic activities of the local people), budget has to be allocated through detailed assessment of every project, the standard design has to be modified to fit with local conditions like type of soil, availability of wind storm and termite attacks should also be considered particularly in the Gash Barka region.

According to the reports of the Ministry of Education, a total of 10.5 million of USD has been allotted for the establishment of the schools that could accommodate over 50,000 students both in the morning and afternoon shifts in all the 67 schools under construction.

Representatives from the World Bank and the European commission participated in the

Sixty-Seven Schools within A Hundred Days

Written by Kesete Ghebrehiwot

workshop to evaluate the work done and also commended the young engineers and the Eritrean communities for their contribution in the realization of set out goals.