1. Message from the Chief of Party (COP)

Welcome to this first issue of the Improving the Quality of Primary Education Program (IQPEP) quarterly newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to highlight program achievements and contemporary issues and trends in education in Ethiopia that are of interest to colleagues in the Ministry of Education (MOE), Regional State Education Bureaus (RSEBs), Woreda (District) Education Offices (WEOs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), primary schools, and the donor community. The newsletter will be disseminated both in hardcopy and electronically to ensure wide coverage.

IQPEP, which started implementing activities in January 2010, is the latest vehicle for USAID support for primary education in Ethiopia through the Academy for Educational Development (AED). IQPEP continues in a refined, improved, and expanded form some of the interventions that previous AED programs implemented, while introducing new activities like a strong focus on improving the teaching of reading in the early grades. The overall aim of the program is to improve the quality of primary education, working in close collaboration with the MOE, RSEBs, WEOs, CTEs, schools, and other key education stakeholders.
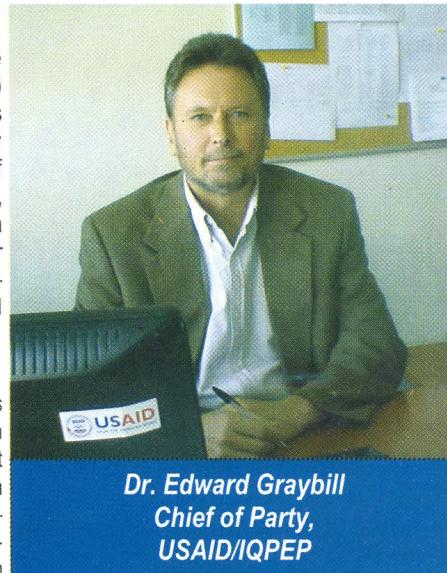
Dr. Edward Graybill
Chief of Party,
USAID/IQPEP

Five interrelated IQPEP program components are working synergistically to bring about the desired quality improvement in primary education. The first is the program's work in *pre-service teacher education*, which involves implementing a number of activities that improve the teaching-learning process in the 30 Colleges of Teacher Education and their approximately 400 linkage primary schools. The ultimate aim is to assist colleges to produce new teachers who are competent and committed to their profession.

Second, the program's pre-service activities are complemented by a number of teacher professional development activities designed and implemented by our *in-service teacher training* component. The aim—through myriad training workshops and other capacity building activities— is to enhance the skills of existing teachers. Many new training materials in the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) as well as in early grade reading are being developed, and teachers and principals in the program's 2,215 in-service cluster and satellite schools are being trained in those materials.

Third, because teacher and principal professional development activities do not take place in a vacuum but are rooted in the broader education context, they require a supportive environment in order to flourish. To help nurture this "enabling environment," IQPEP's *planning and management* component is designing and implementing many capacity building activities to improve the skills of key colleagues in the MOE, RSEBs, WEOs, as well as principals in schools, in the areas of planning, management, leadership, and supervision.

The fourth IQPEP program component, implemented with the program's partner PACT/Ethiopia, is cross-cutting: *gender equity and participation*. The aim of this component is to infuse into all the other program components—which includes our work in the colleges, schools, WEOs, RSEBs, and the MOE—an awareness of, and sensitivity about, gender issues, and a commitment to pursuing equal opportunity policies and practices that enhance the performance of girls and female students in schools and colleges. IQPEP also endeavors to increase leadership and management opportunities throughout the education system for women.

The fifth and final IQPEP program component is *MERA (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Analysis)*, which is also a cross-cutting component. MERA is tasked with not only tracking and reporting on all program indicators on an annual basis, but also with conducting numerous evaluations and assessments of key program activities in order to document program impact.

I trust you will enjoy this inaugural issue of the IQPEP newsletter. We welcome your comments and feedback, and look forward to continuing to work together.

USAID is Working for Quality Primary Education in Ethiopia

2. News

A National USAID/IQPEP Gender Workshop Conducted

By Tessema Getahun

Ambo: A national Gender Equity and Participation workshop was held in Ambo town during September 17-18, 2010, planned and delivered by IQPEP's gender team.

In his opening speech, Dr. Edward Graybill, Chief of Party for USAID/IQPEP, noted that "the main objectives of IQPEP's gender component are to improve access, persistence, and success of girls in schools and colleges, and to enhance leadership and management opportunities in the education sector for women."

He pointed out that the two main objectives of the workshop were: first, to orient, and create a common understanding and ownership of IQPEP's gender activities among the participants, and, second, to ensure the effective and timely implementation of the activities, their institutionalization, and sustainability.

Gender Equity and Participation workshop participants in Ambo Town, September, 2010

The IQPEP Gender Director, W/ro Belainesh Woubishet, then provided a brief overview of the five-year IQPEP gender activities. She pointed out that IQPEP will:

- establish/strengthen Girls Education Advisory Committees (GEACs) in over 2,600 IQPEP primary schools to involve the community in order to increase enrolment and participation of girls and to fight against bad cultural practices that inhibit girls' education.
- work with 30 CTEs to improve the participation, performance, and achievement of college female students through supporting girls clubs, tutorial programs, action research, and monitoring and supervision.
- build the capacity of female teachers in management and leadership skills so that they can assume leadership positions in the education system.
- increase the participation of females in capacity building training programs in order to enable them to be competent professionals.
- influence gender policies to enhance equal and equitable gender participation throughout the education sector.

Accordingly, activities that will be implemented in colleges and at the regional level, and the support required of the stakeholders to implement these activities, as well as their roles and responsibilities were discussed and agreed upon. During the discussion participants promised to implement the gender activities with commitment, and it was also emphasized that the IQPEP gender team should build a consolidated follow up and communication mechanism with stakeholders.

Also during the workshop, participants reviewed different draft implementation documents such as functions of Gender Units, Girls Clubs, and college gender activities implementation guidelines that had been prepared in advance by the IQPEP gender team, and provided valuable feedback.

In addition, the Director of the MERA (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Analysis) component of IQPEP, Dr. Amare Asgedom, presented the findings of a baseline study that MERA conducted on the existence and functioning of Girls Clubs and Gender Units. The findings of both assessments indicated inadequacy in terms of functions by the majority, which was attributed to mainly infrastructure inadequacies such as finances, time, and space. During the discussion it was acknowledged that 'functional inadequacy' was an early warning to all participants.

The issue of identifying the functions of girls clubs, as distinct from the functions of the gender units in the colleges, was also raised and discussed. The functions/activities of the gender units and girls clubs drafted by the IQPEP gender team were approved to be used by the colleges, which will help the girls clubs and gender units perform more effectively.

USAID/IQPEP Receives Best Achievement Trophy

By Tessema Getahun

Adama: An Education Conference was held by the Oromia Education Bureau during September 19-20, 2010 with the theme of disseminating a report of the last fiscal year and the introduction of the Five Year Development and Transformation Plan.

During the conference, the USAID/IQPEP Oromia Regional Field Office was awarded a cup for the exemplary work it has done so far in the region. The Regional Education Bureau congratulated IQPEP, and all its regional and central staff, for their achievements and strong reputation.

According to the USAID/IQPEP Oromia Regional Field Office, the conference also gave due attention to the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP), Universal Primary Education (UPE), the Five Year Development and Transformation Plan of the Ethiopian Government, and the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the region.

USAID/IQPEP Oromia Regional Office Team Holding the Cup

4. The PMIS: A Means to Reduce the Digital Divide

The Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) is database application software designed to maintain comprehensive data of employees working in the Ethiopian education sector. The software enables the user to obtain and manage information on human resources in order to inform decision-makers, to produce plans, and to carry out day to day activities effectively.

The system was implemented by previous AED programs in the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, Regional State Education Bureaus, City Administration Education Bureaus, and 130 Woreda (District) Education Offices across the country during 2003-2009. The implementation of the system will further be extended to 200 new Woreda Education Offices by USAID/IQPEP from 2010 to 2014.

The primary objective of the PMIS is to support education sector planners and decision makers in their human resource development endeavors. The PMIS has the following advantages:
- helps to maintain the balance between demand for and supply of human resources.
- enables staff to prepare short and long term human resource development plans.
- helps to make a human resource inventory on the basis of salary range, age classification, recruitment period, educational level, type of education trained, gender issues, separation, promotion, and salary increment.
- facilitates reliable and fast dissemination of human resource information in respective organizations.
- enables staff to oversee and manage proper staff transfer, training, and staff development.
- helps to properly identify seniority, merit, and to prepare retirement plans.

(See page 4)

Three Workshops Held on Early Grade Reading Modules Development

By Tessema Getahun

Addis Ababa: USAID/IQPEP's Teacher Development component conducted three consecutive workshops on Early Grade Reading at the Ethiopian Ministry of Education during September 16 to 25, 2010.

The purposes of the workshops were to incorporate Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) findings into the draft modules, to validate the Early Grade Reading Modules, and to incorporate comments and feedback from the validation into the modules and to then finalize the modules. Once approved by the Ministry of Education, the four modules will be used to train primary teachers in how to effectively teach reading and writing in the first primary cycle.

In the first workshop, which was held during September 16-19, 2010, 15 module developers and translators took part; they then served as facilitators during the second workshop which was held during September 20-22. The second workshop involved 64 participants, of whom 49 were first cycle elementary school teachers. During that workshop, the four modules were validated by the teachers. The third workshop was conducted for the

Early Grade Reading Module Development Workshop, MoE Hall, Addis Ababa, September 2010

same 15 module developers and translators, the aim being to incorporate comments and feedback identified during the first two workshops into the four training modules.

The three consecutive workshops were led by Dr. James Wile, an international consultant on Early Grade Reading from AED. The workshops were structured according to five groups representing the major languages in which the modules will be produced: Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somali, and English.

The PMIS *(Continued from page 3)*

Recently, due to some changes in the organizational structure of the beneficiary organizations, IQPEP updated and modified the software in line with the new organizational structure. The updating and modification process was undertaken with the close consultation of the beneficiaries, and the newly modified PMIS software has been disseminated to previous woredas by providing a refresher training.

The regions and woredas that have effectively utilized the PMIS software have recognized its benefits and have assigned permanent personnel in their respective organizations to manage the system. The PMIS is thus seen as an important planning tool that is being promoted and sustained with maximum utilization.

(Contributed by Planning and Management Central Office Team)

**PMIS Training MoE Hall, Addis Ababa
May, 2010**

### 5. A New Instrument for Assessing the Quality of Primary Education

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is a learning measure to report the foundation levels of students' learning, including the first steps students take in learning to read, such as recognizing letters of the alphabet, reading simple words, and understanding simple words and sentences. The purpose of learning-to-read is 'reading-to-learn'. Development of EGRA started in 2006 as many countries felt a need to know how well children in the early grades of primary schools are acquiring reading skills. As a simple instrument of assessment, EGRA was therefore adopted by many developing countries including several in Africa: Kenya, Egypt, Mali, Uganda, Senegal, and South Africa.

Grounded in the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) and the USAID financed Improving the Quality of Primary Education Program (IQPEP), Ethiopia launched a nation-wide Grade 2 and Grade 3 Oral Reading Proficiency assessment in six languages: Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Harari and Sidamigna. In the process, more than 13,000 children participated in EGRA with a total time of 15 minute sessions with each child.

This assessment was carried out during May and early June 2010 by RTI (Research Triangle Institute) and IQPEP, working collaboratively with the MOE. USAID (in Ethiopia and in Washington) funded the assessment. IQPEP independently collected data from 2,600 support-recipient schools by taking a sample size of 111 schools and testing about 4,440 children. RTI covered the rest (about 227 schools), excluding the IQPEP–supported schools. Dr. Benjamin Piper, the RTI consultant, prepared a consolidated report by merging IQPEP data with RTI data. The research result was discussed in a two-day conference (3-4, November, 2010) at Adama Executive Hotel. This conference was attended by MOE, USAID, IQPEP and RTI officials. Participants organized into language groups set benchmarks and targets of their respective regions. They promised to work hard to redress the problem.

IQPEP will use EGRA data as a baseline reference against which to compare achievements of its interventions that will address current needs in terms of early grade reading in schools, such as teacher training (see article in this newsletter on early grade reading module development) and establishing Reading Centers in schools. In 2012 and in 2014 IQPEP will collect the same data independently in order to further monitor the impact of its interventions.
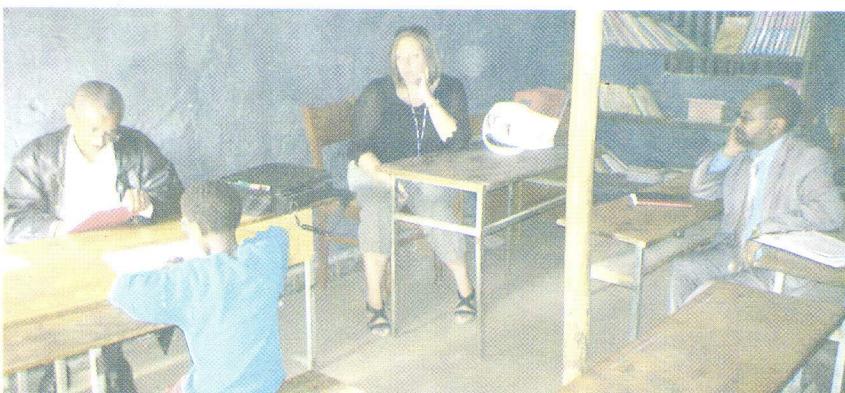
**EGRA visit at Tibeb Menged Elementary School
in Addis Ababa, June, 2010**

(Contributed by Dr. Amare Asgedom)