



SINANA

2012-2013 COMPLETED PROJECT REPORT





HOW WE GOT STARTED

In 2012, imagine1day was ready to expand to a new region in Ethiopia. Through our work in the northern region of Tigray, we learned many lessons that helped us refine our model, and we were excited to diversify our experience, scale our impact, and continue to improve and iterate our approach.

After assessing different regions for the quality of their education system, their school attendance rates, and the presence of other organizations working in the education sector we selected the region of Oromia, the largest and most populated region of Ethiopia.

When we consulted Oromia's Regional Education Bureau, they sent us to the Bale Zone, where a low number of schools, a low enrollment rate and a high number of out-of-school children exposed a clear gap in access and quality of education. Following their advice, we contacted the Bale Zone Education Office to determine which district most needed our support. Thanks to district ratings acquired from the Bale Zone's Education Office, we discovered the district of Sinana, which had one of the lowest education ratings in the Bale Zone.

In October 2012, we officially started our first project in the region of Oromia. Unlike our projects in Tigray, we elected to implement a one-year pilot project to learn more about the district of Sinana before a long-term plan was put into effect. This pilot would also allow us to create strong partnerships and to ensure that local, district, zone and regional governments would all be willing and able to collaborate with us to meet our goals.

It quickly became evident that the district of Sinana was eager for us to expand our reach. Although we initially wanted to work with just 13 schools, the district government contacted us after our first teacher training sessions and asked us to broaden our training to include all 35 schools in the district. This was the beginning of a fruitful relationship.





THE CHALLENGE

When we started working in the Sinana district in October 2012, learning environments were poor and student outcomes were suffering.

Thanks to aggressive school recruitment campaigns led by the district government, school enrollment had ballooned by more than 40% in the last decade, but local schools simply couldn't keep up with demand. Despite the district's commitment to improving its education system, Sinana had one of the lowest ratings in the zone.

Throughout the district, 26,737 students were squeezed into 35 schools made mostly of mud, wood and straw. Sixty per cent of these had no library, half of all schools had no access to potable water, and only three schools had pit latrines.

Still, students wanted to learn. For example, in the community of Gulcho, leaders petitioned the local government to build their children a new school. They were denied but not discouraged. They built a school of their own. While the community's dedication to education was clear, their mud, wood and straw classrooms were dusty and poorly lit.

After visiting several villages in Sinana and witnessing these poor learning conditions first hand, imagine1day was inspired to partner with communities in this district to make a new reality possible.





GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Our objective in Sinana is to improve the access, quality, equity and efficiency of 35 schools benefitting more than 26,000 students. We've set out to achieve the following goals by December 31, 2015:

1. To increase the enrolment rate of school-age children from 66.6% to 90%, and to decrease the dropout rate from 4% to 0.5%
2. To increase the amount of children who complete primary school from 57.2% to 75%.
3. To reduce the distance kids walk to school from 10 km to 1 km in four communities.
4. To improve students' GPA in all schools by 8%.
5. To build the professional capacity of 410 teachers to improve student participation and learning outcomes in school.
6. To improve the management and leadership capacity of 245 members of Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) and 35 principals from 35 schools.
7. To form and strengthen the technical capacity of 21 Water Management Committee members from three communities.
8. To improve the government rating of the Sinana district's education system from "C" (the lowest) to "A" (the highest) level.



THE 2012-2013 GAME PLAN

1. NEW SCHOOLS, LATRINES, WATERPOINTS & LIBRARIES

- We completed one Grade 5-8 primary school and started building four additional schools.
- One new Early Childhood Education (ECE) classroom was built to create a safe, welcoming learning space for children aged 4 to 6 in the community of Gulcho. Four more ECE classrooms are in construction.
- Gender-segregated latrines in the community of Gulcho now help girls stay in school after they hit puberty. Four more are in construction.
- Three new water points provide a much-needed source of fuel for children during the day and encouraged girls—who are often responsible for fetching water—to attend classes.
- A new library in Gulcho offers a happy place for students to study after class and to improve their literacy skills.



2. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EDUCATORS & COMMUNITY LEADERS

- We trained 410 teachers in active learning, life skills, creative classrooms, literacy boosting, science, special needs and inclusive education.
- In addition, 74 education supervisors and experts in the district and zone also participated in all of the above trainings.
- A total of 35 school principals were trained in school management and leadership.
- We trained 245 PTA members on the importance of community-school partnerships and income generating activities to improve the long-term sustainability of their schools.
- Nine members of our Participatory Advisory Council (PAC) from the district government received communication, leadership, and project monitoring and evaluation training.

3. EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES & SUPPORT

- We provided 320 combined desks, 23 blackboards, 23 classroom notice boards, four school notice boards, and desks and chairs for 23 teachers in five newly constructed schools.
- Manufactured and distributed furniture for four ECE classrooms and two libraries.
- Built four playgrounds for children.
- Distributed science kits with chemicals to 35 schools.
- Provided 40 reading corners for 10 schools.
- Sports material, creative writing materials and school club supplies were provided to 16 schools.
- We planted 14,400 trees in seven communities.
- We provided 4,646 books for 23 schools.
- To ensure the long-term sustainability of their school programs, five schools received a total of 90,000 ETB (\$5,143 CAD) in seed funding to start their own income generating activities.





OUR RESULTS

Here are 10 project highlights we achieved between 2012 and 2013

1. Students' average GPA across 35 schools increased 5%.
2. The dropout rate decreased from 4% to 1%.
3. The repetition rate decreased from 1.7% to 0.75%.
4. The five schools that received seed funding to generate their own income each started implementing their own income generating activities.
5. Reinvigorated by imagine1day's leadership training, parents and community leaders started improving their schools on their own: 22 communities built new libraries and 25 communities built pit latrines for the first time.
6. The use of science kits and hands-on learning during science class increased from 0.1% to 57%.
7. A learner-centered teaching approach based on student discussion and debate increased from 6% to 75%.
8. Inter and intra sport competition increased by 209.5%.
9. The percentage of students actively participating in school clubs increased from 42% to 72%.
10. Community contributions to local schools increased by 110%.



WHAT WE LEARNED

1. THE ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

When we were planning our first school construction in Sinana, we didn't consider the incredible amount of rain that falls in the highlands of the Bale Zone, where this district is located. This led to delays and difficulties during our first school construction. Since then, we never forget to consider the climate conditions when we plan constructions in new regions and districts that we enter.

2. IF YOU CAN'T DO IT, DELEGATE

For years now, imagine1day has been relying on Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members to help us monitor the construction of their schools. However, until this year, we never formally trained our PTA groups on construction; since most of the communities we work with are used to building their own homes, we relied solely on their existing construction knowledge.

This approach seemed to work in Tigray, where we had a full-time construction supervisor able to travel regularly to our project sites, but in the Sinana district, one of our school constructions experienced delays and was not built with the highest quality standards.

Fortunately, our construction supervisor from Addis Ababa had an idea: he started formally training local PTA members in basic construction concepts. At the end of his one-day training session, participants knew the proper sand, cement and water ratio necessary to make strong cement, they could evaluate the quality of iron sheets, and they knew what type of wood should be used in constructions. Now, when we call communities to ask about the progress of their school projects, they are able to give us thorough updates on their contractor's work.

Since we started this training, none of our Sinana constructions have experienced delays, and imagine1day's schools are now considered a benchmark for other organizations and by the government in the region.

In addition, after working with us, PTA members have newfound knowledge that they are able to apply when building their own homes or other community constructions. These new training sessions are a win-win, low-cost solution that help us ensure the highest quality of our new classrooms.





WHERE WE ARE NOW

Since January 2014 we've already built four additional schools in the Sinana district, and we plan on building four more by the end of 2017. In addition, we will continue training teachers, parents and school principals to improve the quality of education and community-school partnerships until the end of 2015.





A STORY FROM THE FIELD

Because no student should have to learn in the dirt

The community of Gulcho takes their children's education seriously. Just ask school principal, Tsegaye Defersha: "I have worked in several communities during my career as a Principal and I have never witnessed a community more dedicated to education than Gulcho," he says.

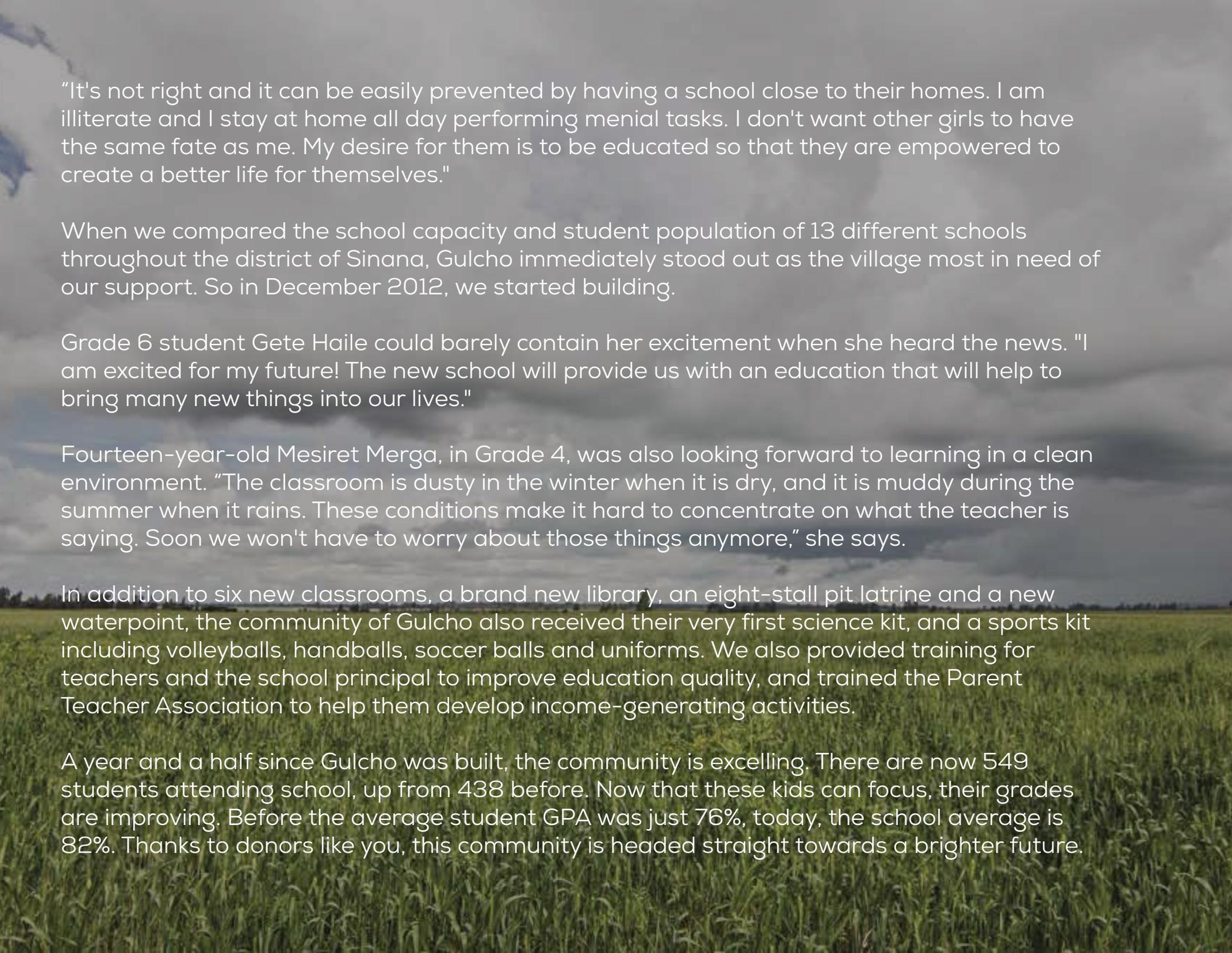
"They built a school for their children using whatever resources they had available. The District Education Office wouldn't assign any teachers to Gulcho's school because it said that it didn't meet the government's standards. But the community didn't give up. Instead, every household contributed money and together they hired their own teachers."

Fast forward a few years, and Gulcho had 438 students sharing seven classrooms made of wood, mud and straw. The school had no library, no source of water, a single pit latrine made of twigs and mud, and seven blackboards in severe disrepair. Adanech Tsefye, a Grade 3 teacher, was struggling to teach the kids she was responsible for. "I have 100 students in my Grade 3 class who all sit on the dirt floor. It's not a good environment for learning," she says. Despite these difficult learning conditions, the school had a 0% dropout rate.

For Women's Affairs Leader Fayisse Tsega, the situation was unbearable. "It hurts me to know that girls are the ones who suffer the most when there is no school close by for them to attend. For example, during the long walks to school, girls are harassed and sometimes even raped or kidnapped."



Women's Affairs Leader Fayisse Tsega



"It's not right and it can be easily prevented by having a school close to their homes. I am illiterate and I stay at home all day performing menial tasks. I don't want other girls to have the same fate as me. My desire for them is to be educated so that they are empowered to create a better life for themselves."

When we compared the school capacity and student population of 13 different schools throughout the district of Sinana, Gulcho immediately stood out as the village most in need of our support. So in December 2012, we started building.

Grade 6 student Gete Haile could barely contain her excitement when she heard the news. "I am excited for my future! The new school will provide us with an education that will help to bring many new things into our lives."

Fourteen-year-old Mesiret Merga, in Grade 4, was also looking forward to learning in a clean environment. "The classroom is dusty in the winter when it is dry, and it is muddy during the summer when it rains. These conditions make it hard to concentrate on what the teacher is saying. Soon we won't have to worry about those things anymore," she says.

In addition to six new classrooms, a brand new library, an eight-stall pit latrine and a new waterpoint, the community of Gulcho also received their very first science kit, and a sports kit including volleyballs, handballs, soccer balls and uniforms. We also provided training for teachers and the school principal to improve education quality, and trained the Parent Teacher Association to help them develop income-generating activities.

A year and a half since Gulcho was built, the community is excelling. There are now 549 students attending school, up from 438 before. Now that these kids can focus, their grades are improving. Before the average student GPA was just 76%, today, the school average is 82%. Thanks to donors like you, this community is headed straight towards a brighter future.



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