

ENTERPRISE CASE STORY | LABOUR SYSTEM

AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE SERVICES AT DAGMAWI MENELIK PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDCARE CENTRE

Dagmawi Menelik Primary School Childcare Centre was established in 2020 with support from DVB Project, the Adult Community Learning Centre, and the Urban Safety Net Programme. It started service provision with 12 children. However, shortly after opening, the Centre had to halt operations due to COVID-19 and government measures to control the spread of the virus.



The Centre was able to reopen in July 2021, but parents were initially hesitant to send their children due to ongoing fears related to COVID-19. However, over time fears eased and as of June 2022, the Centre was providing childcare services for 55 registered parents (mostly women), serving 59 children between the ages of nine months to four years. Its main target users are school employees, civil servants in the woreda/sub-county, and poor community members who are willing and able to pay 350 ETB/month. A small number of parents receive free childcare services for a period based on their socio-economic status and approval of the two committees established to provide management and technical support – the Parents Committee and the Technical Management Committee.

The childcare centre is comprised of two buildings and playground spaces, which have been designated and renovated for the provision of childcare services. As of June 2022, there were four trained nannies and one coordinator who manages day-to-day operations. Opening hours are 7:00AM to 6:00PM on weekdays.

Dagmawi Menelik Primary School was part of LIWAY's market-based intervention to increase women's access to affordable childcare to enable them to participate in and more fully benefit from employment. In addition to Dagmawi Menelik Primary School, LIWAY identified three public childcare centres including Kokebe Tsibha Primary School and Nifas Silk and Entoto Poly Technic Colleges with the aim of strengthening their capacities and expanding service provision to both school employees and surrounding community members at affordable prices. The agreement with the institutions was that they would avail physical spaces and buildings, cost share development of childcare facilities, deploy trained nannies, and accept unemployed women who are actively seeking job opportunities but are forced to remain home due to childcare responsibilities.

Due to staff changes and delayed processes at the other institutions, Dagmawi Menelik Primary School Childcare Centre stands out as being the only one that is currently active and started service provision as expected. Its success can be attributed to several factors, which provide key learnings and can be adopted by others. Lessons can also be learned from the Centre's challenges and areas for improvement.

SUCCESS FACTORS

- **Management structure of the childcare centre:** Two management committees were established to provide technical and management support to the childcare centre. The **Technical Management Committee** consists of six members including the Head and Team Lead from the Woreda Education Bureau, the school Principal and Community Learning Center (CLC) Coordinator, and Team Leads of Woreda Women, Children & Social Affairs and Bureau of Labour, Enterprise & Industrial Development (BoLEID). The **Parents Committee** is comprised of five members selected from the parents who use the childcare services.
- **Integration with other projects/programmes:** The childcare centre was initially established with support from DVB project, the Adult Community Learning Centre, and the Urban Safety Net Programme. These projects/programmes also helped mobilise the community and organise awareness raising sessions on childcare services and women’s empowerment.
- **Strong engagement of sub-city and woreda sector bureau officials:** Dagmawi Menelik Primary School has been highlighted as a model for others and has drawn the attention of government officials. Officials of different sector bureaus and offices frequently visit the school and have provided needed technical support. For example, the Woreda Women, Children & Social Affairs office trained and certified nannies in partnership with the Nege Tesfa Project.
- **School management commitment:** The school management, particularly the Principal, are very committed and willing to support various initiatives to help the school and surrounding community members. In addition to the childcare centre, capacity and commitment are demonstrated through programmes such as School Feeding, Adult Community Learning, Special Needs Education, and Kindergarten, as well as others supported by development partners and government.



CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Capacity limit:** Although there is high demand for the childcare services, the school is unable to expand its childcare centre due to financial and technical capacity limitations. However, there are some positive signs from the sub-city and woreda government regarding establishment of childcare centres using available space in their compound based on the experiences of Dagmawi Menelik Primary School.
- **Dropout:** Some parents are forced to relocate to try to find new jobs and affordable houses and others are struggling to pay 350 ETB/month due to increased costs of living and lack of employment opportunities.
- **Quality improvements and additions:** Additional improvements can be made to make the playground safer for children and increase sanitation/hygiene supplies (e.g., cleaners, soap, wipes, diapers). In addition, other services such as feeding/nutrition and early childhood education can be added to improve the quality of childcare services beyond basic care.

- **Resource mobilisation:** Service fees paid by parents and initial cost sharing support from LIWAY are the main sources of funding used to cover operational costs. The Centre is challenged by sustained price increases of sanitation/hygiene products and needs to explore other opportunities to ensure sustainability of services, such as partnerships with and contributions of nearby private business owners, key government institutions, and sanitation and hygiene manufacturers.

