

Project Launch Report

Enabling Local Ingenuity through Catch-up and Life Skills for Young Girls in War-Affected Tigray



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Axum, Tigray

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1. Introduction

On 07/07/2024, Initiative Africa organized a project launching program in Axum. The project, "Enabling Local Ingenuity through Catch-up and Life Skills for Young Girls in the War-Affected Tigray," funded by the Malala Fund, will be implemented in Tigray for three years. This project aims to address the educational and psychosocial needs of young girls affected by the conflict in the region through the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), psychosocial support, and life skills training.

The event focused on the critical need for accelerated learning programs (ALPs) to support young girls affected by the conflict. The opening remarks were given by a Tigray Region Education Bureau head, followed by an introduction to Initiative Africa by Nebiyeleul, and a presentation on the "Empowering Young Girls through Catch Up" project by Dalaya.



The event also featured a comments and questions session, followed by small group planning sessions led by Dalaya, Daniel, Nebiyeleul, and Abebaw. Nebiyeleul delivered the closing remarks before participants proceeded to lunch. The day concluded with a discussion involving school directors. The following report integrates key points from the workshop.

2. Q &A Session Highlights:

Following Dalaya's presentation on the project, the participants raised several important suggestions, comments on the project and specific feedback on the ALP program.

General Comments on the Project:

Participants emphasized the urgent humanitarian needs, including the critical need for school feeding programs due to the ongoing crisis. Families are struggling to provide for their children, and many schools are also serving as IDP centers, impacting the learning environment. Supporting families was highlighted as a key factor in motivating children's school attendance. Infrastructure challenges were discussed, noting that the war has caused significant damage to

school infrastructure, hindering the provision of quality education. A budget is needed to maintain and repair demolished schools in target areas.



Community engagement was another point of concern, with current awareness of the community on ALP seen as a serious challenge during implementation. Improving the economic capacity of mothers needs to be given high priority as an intervention measure. Effective resource allocation was stressed, with participants calling for thorough needs assessments to prevent duplication of efforts and optimize resource utilization.

Program sustainability concerns were raised, focusing on the long-term commitment of program implementers and the prevention of program abandonment after initial launches. The importance of providing psychosocial support to teachers, in addition to students, was also emphasized.

The participant suggested including school feeding in the next intervention. Providing teaching material support and lessons from other successful programs like Geneva Global were recommended, along with the need to renovate burned-down classrooms and construct new ones. They also highlighted the importance of providing economic support such as job creation to increase school enrollment.

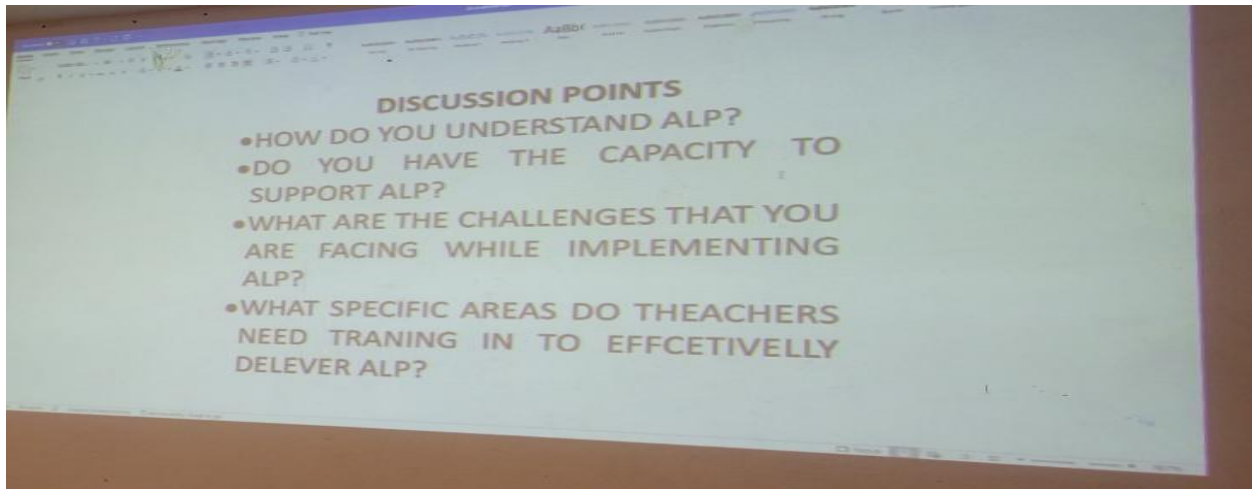
Specific Feedback on the ALP Program in the Region:

Participants noted that the ALP program has shown promising results in primary schools but still has room for improvement. There is a desire to explore innovative implementation strategies. However, there is strong resistance to implementing ALP in high schools, with concerns that it may negatively impact students' competitiveness. Clear demarcation on the target group for ALP implementation is necessary, and the need to implement ALP according to the rules and regulations of local governments was emphasized.



3. Group Exercise Presentation Notes

Following quick health break, the participants were divided into four groups to discuss key points important for the implementation of the project. four general discussion points were provided, focusing on the concept of ALP, the challenges faced in ALP implementation, the schools capacity for ALP implementation, and the types of training needed for teachers for successful ALP implementation in Tigray.



A. Challenges Identified

Attitudinal Barriers:

- High stigma and psychological ignorance from teachers and school administrators due to unpaid salaries.
- Emotional and psychosocial bullying leading to isolation and exclusion.

Knowledge Barriers:

- Significant skill gaps among school leaders and teachers in implementing inclusive education and ALP.

Inflexibility of Curriculum:

- Lack of ALP curriculum for grades 9-12 in war-affected areas.

Policy Barriers:

- Top-down policy approach that is not culturally sensitive or community resource-based.

Economic Barriers:

- Poverty and marginalization of war-affected people,
- Inadequate educational resources,

- Unpaid teacher salaries (17 months).

Physical/Infrastructural Barriers:

- Inadequate learning facilities,
- low hygiene standards,
- lack of accessibility for war-affected children.

B. Capacity to Support ALP

Increased Student Success:

- Students allowed early entrance to elementary school showed improved achievement and socialization.

Support for Academically Gifted Students:

- Accelerated learning programs enhance academic self-concept and overall self-esteem.

Collaboration:

- Increased and effective collaboration between stakeholders, including CSOs educators, parents, community-based organizations, and policymakers, .

C. Training for Teachers

- Provide training for teachers, the local community, and students on
 - ALP, subject area curriculum, methodology, pedagogy, ICT, leadership, class room management, conflict resolution,
 - Psychosocial, life skill and mental health support.
- Ensure support for children affected by gender-based violence through psychosocial and mental health interventions.



4. Key Recommendations

1. Comprehensive Psychosocial Support:

- Provide services for children, their families, and teachers to address emotional and psychological needs.

2. Accelerated Learning Model:

- Implement a model that targets missed or disrupted learning with tailored interventions.

3. Encourage Continued Attendance:

- Create conditions that support children's continued engagement in learning.

4. Collaboration:

- Prioritize collaboration between stakeholders to address challenges and develop effective strategies for educational recovery.

Conclusion

The project launch of "Enabling Local Ingenuity through Catch-up and Life Skills for Young Girls in the War-Affected Tigray" highlighted critical needs, challenges, and recommendations

for effective implementation of the ALP in Tigray. By addressing these points, the program aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, particularly for girls and women in conflict-affected areas.