



# Life Skills Training Report

Report on Primary and Secondary School Girls' Life Skills Training in Mekelle, Ethiopia from Sept. 16-20, 2013

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## Project Objectives:

The Life Skills Training carried out by MCI in Mekelle had two foci and was composed of two individual training programs. *The Life Skills Training: Focus Waterborne Disease* was a one-week training course seeking to educate teenage girls about leadership, self-confidence, community-building, leadership competencies and public speaking. The training sought to provide the necessary tools for girls to develop and implement a community campaign at the close of the training – in this case, a video to be shown in schools to build awareness of waterborne disease and how to prevent it. The second component of the training program, *Life Skills Training: Teachers' Professional Development*, was a three-day training program for teachers and girls' club stakeholders in how to educate girls in life skills and leadership development. The training focused on pedagogy and a student-centered learning model.



## Background on Waterborne Diseases based on MCI's Needs Assessment Research

(Castro & Maoulidi) <http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/files/2012/12/Mekelle-Water-Sanitation-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

### III. Basic City Information

Mekelle is the sixth largest city in Ethiopia, established as an urban center in 1869-73. Located 780 km to the north of Addis Ababa, it is the capital city of the Tigray National Regional State and one of northern Ethiopia's primary economic and education centers. It is currently the fastest growing city in Ethiopia, Mekelle has expanded tremendously in recent years, incorporating smaller villages and towns in the immediate vicinity. As of 2007, Mekelle City had a population of 215,546 and an area of 109.36 square kilometers.

## II. Water and Sanitation

The city of Mekelle lacks a comprehensive water and sanitation system, even though improving water and sanitation resources is crucial for the reduction of waterborne diseases. At citywide meetings, Mekelle stakeholders expressed that their biggest health concerns were related to water and sanitation. The level of contamination in river water; the accumulation of garbage in the streets; the availability of soap; the shortage and condition of school latrines, and the construction of new houses without proper toilets or wash facilities were all highlighted as issues that need to be addressed.



Water is supplied to residents through public taps and pipelines, pumped in from reservoirs and collected from rivers, streams, pools and drainage canals. It is estimated that only 50-60 percent of families has access to a tap or to in-house plumbing; other families obtain their water through any available source.

## III. Waterborne Diseases

Waterborne diseases have a disproportionate effect on infants and young children in Mekelle. Each year approximately 133,000 cases of diarrhea appear in children aged two months to five years. Common waterborne disease agents include *Vibrio cholerae*, *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella* and the diarrheogenic *Escherichia coli*. Inadequate access to potable water and poor sanitation account for the majority of these instances of diarrheal disease.



Many deaths from dehydration and malnutrition among infants and young children are also due to complications from waterborne bacterial infections. Poorly functioning municipal water distribution systems and contaminated surface water sources contribute to the transmission of waterborne bacterial diseases. This risk could be diminished substantially with improved water handling and chlorination.

## IV. Hygiene and Education

In general, there is limited awareness about the relationship between poor hygiene and disease among the general public in Mekelle. With water- and sanitation-related diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid resulting in numerous deaths every year, hygiene education and promotion are crucial for prevention, and emphasizing the importance of hand-washing with soap and water can reduce significantly the incidence of diarrheal diseases.

## Project Overview:

The *Life Skills Training Round 2* was comprised of two separate yet connected trainings. The first week of training, *Life Skills Training: Focus Waterborne Disease*, was a one-week course for primary and secondary school girls from the greater Mekelle area. Four schools sent 25 female student representatives to the training. The girls participated in a vigorous, interactive, student-centered program, which sought to provide them with the skills necessary to become leaders within their community. The days were broken up into various topics focused on the main themes of building the girls' leadership skills, video production capabilities and a knowledge base concerning waterborne disease transmission and prevention. The four initial training days provided the girls with ample time to discuss the issues, learn together and to grow as a group. The final day was reserved for the girls to create their waterborne disease educational video. The video was developed for the purpose of being shown in their schools as an educational tool.

The second week of training, *Life Skills Training: Teachers' Professional Development*, was a three-day training attended by 13 teachers from four different schools, in addition to two Mekelle representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Bureau of Women's Affairs. The participants received training in the pedagogy of facilitating and teaching in a student-centered, supportive classroom and concentrated on how questions are asked, topics taught and students supported. All instruction was based on the same student-centered model of teaching that was the focus of this training.



## Beneficiaries:

*Direct Beneficiaries:* Direct beneficiaries of the trainings were 25 young women and 13 teachers from four primary and secondary schools around the Mekelle area, in addition to representatives from the Mekelle offices of the Ministry of Education and the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

*Indirect Beneficiaries:* Indirect beneficiaries included the female classmates from the four participating schools, who will learn many of the leadership lessons in their girls' clubs, as well as in direct classroom instruction from participating teachers. Additionally, boys and girls at the four schools will be indirect beneficiaries of hygiene- and health-related knowledge growth. School-age children across Mekelle will also be indirect beneficiaries of the training and the resulting activities.



## Daily Training Outline:

*The Life Skills Trainings* focused on different topics each day. The training day began at 8:30AM and concluded around 5PM, with a break for lunch. Thus, the training was split into morning and afternoon sessions, with tea or soda breaks halfway through each session. Each session also had a mixture of team-building activities interspersed with the academic lesson components. The outline for academic components of the training was as follows:

### **Life Skills Training: Focus Waterborne Disease**

#### **Monday, September 16:**

##### *Session 1: Introduction*

Activities established the norms for the training workshop, including setting rules, expectations and introductions.

##### *Session 2: Leadership and Competencies*

Activities focused on leadership building. The girls actively discussed what it meant to be a leader in their community, focusing on female and teen leadership. The group explored various leadership styles and discussed when each might be most appropriate.



#### **Tuesday, September 17:**

##### *Session 1: Description*

The early part of the morning focused on presentation skills and how the girls can use body language to effectively convey a topic or perspective. The girls were also guided through a visualization activity focused on using all of their senses in the process of description.

Finally, each girl completed a SWOT (strengths and weakness assessment) analysis of their leadership potential, focused on those areas they would like to improve upon and how.

##### *Session 2: Waterborne Disease Overview Part 1*

Activities were geared towards educating the girls on sanitation and hygiene issues related to waterborne disease. Working collaboratively, the girls explored what good and bad sanitation in Mekelle actually look like, and how to increase hygiene for health-related purposes.

#### **Wednesday, September 18:**

##### *Session 1: Waterborne Disease Overview Part 2*

Activities equipped the girls with knowledge concerning various waterborne diseases in Mekelle, how they are transmitted, their symptoms and how to prevent / protect against them. Girls participated in various interactive activities to learn the difference between parasitic, bacterial and viral infections.

##### *Session 2: Let's Make a Plan*

Activities introduced the idea of "S.M.A.R.T. Goal Setting" – Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely Goals. The girls were asked to create both a personal S.M.A.R.T. goal and a group S.M.A.R.T. campaign goal.

### **Thursday, September 19:**

#### *Session 1: Description & Letter Writing*

Activities provided girls with the skills both to describe their issues and concerns to government officials and to express them effectively on paper, as part of a letter-writing campaign. Each school drafted a letter to the Mayor concerning the waterborne disease problem in Mekelle.

#### *Session 2: Film Planning*

Activities prepared the girls to make a film. The girls learned how to film, record sound and to sync the two. Additionally, the girls split themselves into four content development groups on the following: Introduction to the video, Discussion of hygienic living; Discussion of symptoms of waterborne disease; and, What to do prevent further transmission of waterborne disease. The girls decided that ultimately the film would be an educational video, shown in their schools and girls' clubs to help prevent the spread of waterborne disease.



### **Friday, September 20:**

#### *Session 1: Production*

The girls spent the morning rehearsing and filming carefully planned skits and dialogues, carrying out all the filming and interviews themselves.

#### *Session 2: Celebration*

A small celebration to end the trainings was held with refreshments and some dancing.

### **Life Skills Training: Focus Professional Development**

### **Monday, September 23:**

#### *Session 1: Introduction*

Activities established the norms for the training workshop, including setting rules, expectations and introductions. A guided discussion followed, to examine how the introduction was conducted and why introductions are important.

#### *Session 2: Facilitation*

Using student-centered education models, participants explored the differences between facilitation and teaching, what a classroom set-up looks like for each and how to educate in each methodology. Additionally, participants explored the definitions of and differences between "open" and "closed" questions.

### **Tuesday, September 24:**

#### *Session 1: Leadership*

Activities focused on how to encourage the development of leadership among young females, and various interactive activities were presented that can be used to teach and discuss leadership. At the conclusion of each activity, a breakout session was held to discuss methodology and ways in which the teaching method might be most useful.

## Session 2: Facilitation Discussions

Activities delved more into depth on facilitation pedagogy, providing time for participants, 1) to ask questions about how to educate using facilitation, and 2) to develop case examples of their own regarding how to educate within the context of a student-centered model. Participants in teams gave sample lessons that they might teach in girls' club settings to increase leadership participation. The concept of a SWOT analysis was introduced, and each participant conducted a SWOT analysis on herself, as well as on her school's girls' club.

## Wednesday, September 25:

### Session: Public Speaking and Team Building

Activities provided a space for participants to explore how to encourage public speaking and team building within their girls' clubs through the use of safe space creation, dynamic activities and interactive learning. Participants critiqued themselves and each other, providing advice on how to improve facilitation-based education.



## Challenges:

A number of challenges were encountered throughout this training, the simplest of which related to language, with a significant language barrier between the girls and the lead trainer. As the training progressed, however, the girls became more comfortable with translation and with asking questions when they did not understand. The Mekelle Social Sector Specialist excelled in translating for the girls when necessary.

An additional challenge was that teachers had difficulty freeing themselves in order to attend three consecutive days of training, causing the final day of training to end a bit early.

## Evaluation:

The performance evaluation was done for both trainings. The format for the evaluation was through the activity “brain, bag, or bin”. The girls and teachers were provided with a list of all the learning activities done and asked to rank them as follows:

- Brain – Activities that were super. “Brain activities” are activities which the participants truly learned from and which the participants will draw upon in their daily lives.
- Bag – Activities that were good. “Bag activities” are activities that provide the participants with useful information, but not information they feel they will draw upon in their daily lives.
- Bin – Activities that were bad. “Bin activities” are activities that the participants advocate not be included in the training, should it be repeated, and activities from which they felt they had learned nothing.



The girls conducted their evaluation school by school; results are shown in the table below. Teachers and government representatives filled out their own evaluations, which have been summarized below.

### *School 1: Elala School*

Brain	Bag	Bin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good / Bad hygiene practices</li> <li>• Competencies</li> <li>• Waterborne disease lessons</li> <li>• Team-building</li> <li>• Letter-writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership competencies</li> <li>• Descriptive writing lessons</li> <li>• Public speaking lessons</li> <li>• SWOT</li> <li>• Waterborne diseases in Mekelle overview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movie planning</li> </ul>

### *School 2: Gerebtsedo School*

Brain	Bag	Bin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Competencies</li> <li>• SWOT analysis</li> <li>• Good / Bad hygiene practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competencies</li> <li>• Public Speaking</li> <li>• Descriptive Writing</li> <li>• Waterborne diseases in Mekelle overview</li> <li>• Letter-writing</li> <li>• Team-building</li> <li>• Movie planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ---</li> </ul>

*School 3: Mayweyni School*

Brain	Bag	Bin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competencies</li> <li>• Leadership Competencies</li> <li>• SWOT analysis</li> <li>• Good/ Bad hygiene practices</li> <li>• Clean water sources</li> <li>• Waterborne disease lessons</li> <li>• SMART goals</li> <li>• Letter-writing</li> <li>• Team-building activities</li> <li>• Movie planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive writing</li> <li>• Public speaking</li> <li>• Waterborne diseases in Mekelle overview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ---</li> </ul>

*School 4: Hayelom School*

Brain	Bag	Bin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competencies</li> <li>• Leadership competencies</li> <li>• Descriptive writing</li> <li>• Public speaking</li> <li>• SMART goals</li> <li>• Letter-writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWOT analysis</li> <li>• Good / Bad hygiene</li> <li>• Waterborne diseases in Mekelle overview</li> <li>• Team-building activities</li> <li>• Movie planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ---</li> </ul>

Teachers and government participants overall wrote that almost all activities were considered 'brain' activities. There were no activities listed in the 'bin.' Very few people listed more than one activity in the 'bag' category. The two activities that showed up, the 'bag' most often were certain team-building activities as well as open-closed questions.

The evaluation overall was very successful. With only one group listing one activity in the 'bin' it is clear that both the teachers and girls felt they had learned a lot. The girls were particularly successful at distinguishing between activities they will internalize and activities that have educated them, but which they believe will not be important in their daily lives. The teachers seemed to agree that most activities will be important in their daily teaching lives, thereby corroborating the expectation of the trainers, based upon what was taught to each group.



## Successes:

The training overall was a great success. The girls had very positive things to say about their entire experience, and it was clear to observers that they learned and grew remarkably. Many of the girls become friends and planned future times to meet and discuss in a girls' club setting. The skills they gained are all skills they believe they will be able to use moving forward. Finally, the film they created will have a lasting impact, as the girls plan to use the film to educate their peers at school and in their girls' club about waterborne disease and how to prevent it.



The teachers and government officials seemed both to appreciate and to internalize the training. Many of the teachers, in addition to the representative from the Ministry of Education, commented that the teaching was very effective in explaining and typifying a student-centered education model. The Ministry representative shared that this was the first training he has attended that actually made student-centered education clear for him. Feedback was overwhelmingly supportive, and the representatives from both the Ministry of Education and the Bureau of Women's Affairs requested that the training be replicated and expanded so that others might benefit. With MCI closing in Mekelle, this unfortunately will not be possible under MCI auspices. Still, the girls and teachers trained, in addition to those trained in MCI's earlier Girls' Life Skills Training program back in July, were enthusiastic about their experience and expressed their eagerness to share with their peers both their new understanding of the environmental and public health issues discussed and their appreciation of student-centered learning.

