

From Displacement to Discovery: How Storybooks Are Uplifting Ethiopia's Children

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A cold, rainy July in Ethiopia

July brings cold, muddy rains to Ethiopia. On July 4th, a group of Amhara children, who are internally displaced from the Oromia region, gather at the Ras Abebe Aregay Library in Debre Birhan, to learn and read. These children, who were previously educated in the Afaan Oromo language while in Oromia, used Amharic only at home. Now, in schools and accelerated learning centers within the camps for displaced families in Debre Birhan, they are relearning, including how to read and write in Amharic.



Reading at Ras Abebe Aregay Library

A safe haven for reading and learning

Like other children in town, these displaced kids visit the Ras Aregay Library to access both digital and print books. These reading sessions help them catch up on lessons they missed during their challenging times. The library also serves as a place where they meet and play with other children, helping them to feel a sense of normalcy. The storybooks available in their mother tongue offer them content that is both simple and suitable, expanding their imagination while providing the comfort of using their home language.

Digital reading: A new experience

Reading ASb digital storybooks on the tablets has been a special experience for the children, bringing them great joy.

After a year of internet blockade in the Amhara region due to the ongoing war, the internet was restored just last week. With this reconnection, we are able to access the African Storybook (ASb) website and download storybooks on the ASb Reader. Reading these storybooks on the ASb Reader is a special experience for the kids and they are elated.



More group reading on the Reader

Language learning through Storybooks

The ASb storybooks are not only a source of entertainment but also a tool for languages learning. The children are improving their English by reading English and Amharic versions of the stories. This activity is crucial in preparing them for the upcoming school years. Once their learning gaps are bridged, these children will have the opportunity to excel academically, both in their current studies in Amharic and later when they transition to learning the science subjects in English.



Children supporting each other to read

For close to a year these children have been coming to the library to read and learn and this programme will continue until they are able to return to their homes and communities, or until a lasting solution to the current conflict is found. The role of ASb storybooks has been incredibly important in their journey, providing them with the resources they need to keep learning and growing.