

cooperazione internazionale



Strengthening of the educational sector in Northern Ethiopia



Third Quarter Report

(January - March 2008)

Submitted by COOPI – Ethiopia

to Foundation Assistance

30/05/2008

Index of contents

Page

<u>1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2 IMPLEMENTATION.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>2.1 Coordination with local partners</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>2.2 Staff, equipment, and materials</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>2.3 Activities planned and accomplished in the quarter.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>2.4 Activities planned for the next quarter</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>3 EXTERNAL FACTORS.....</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>18</u>

*Cover image: drama on adult education,
concert and show at Sekota high school, February 16th, 2008*

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The implementation of the project went ahead without major obstacles during the third quarter. The physical activities in Afar Zone 2 progressed steadily: the two fences were completed; the two classroom constructions continued and their walling ended in March. In Sekota City Administration the works went on steadily too. In Sekota Woreda instead the four planned classroom constructions suffered some delays, mostly linked to insufficiency of community contribution and in Jerba's case to an untimely relocation of the building site.

Regarding the software activities, the first weeks of January were spent to conduct some short need assessments among the beneficiaries, and to prepare the implementation plans. Between the end of January, February and March several trainings and experience-sharing visits were conducted in both project areas. Some long term activities were started or continued during the quarter, including adult education in Sekota area, tutorial classes in Abala area, and computer training for education experts in both. In general the software activities posed some challenges in terms of organisation and supervision due to their variety, number and scope. Nevertheless their results were useful and instructive for all the participants.

In the following table the summary of the activities carried out during the quarter is given.

Table 1 Summary of the activities carried out during the quarter

	Unit	Planned in the year	Accomplished in the quarter	Cumulative accomplishment	Remark
Hardware activities					
Abala primary school fence construction	Num	1	1=25%	1=100%	Completed
Berhale school fence construction	Num	1	1=30%	1=100%	Completed
Hidmo school construction	Num	1	1=25%	1=80%	
As Gubi school construction	Num	1	1=50%	1=75%	
Guben water point	Num	1	1=40%	1=55%	Basements and birka completed
Sekota Medhane Alem school rehabilitation	Num	1	1=50%	1=100%	Completed
Sekota high school latrine construction	Num	1	1=50%	1=60%	Slab & pillars under construction
Shimedit school construction	Num	1	1=20%	1=20%	Foundations on going
Ziwna school construction	Num	1	1=20%	1=20%	Foundations on going
Jerba school construction	Num	1	1=15%	1=15%	Works temporarily stopped (see below)
Tsemerna school construction	Num	1	1=20%	1=20%	Foundations on going
Shimedit HDW construction	Num	1	1=10%	1=10%	Excavation on going

	Unit	Planned in the year	Accomplished in the quarter	Cumulative accomplishment	Remark
Software activities					
Purchase of motorbike for supervision in Berahle	Num	1	1=20%	1=100%	Handed over
Computer trainings for civil servants in Abala	Months	4	3	3	To be completed in April
Training and experience sharing for PTA members (Abala & Berahle)	Num	2	1=100%	1=100%	Training completed; experience-sharing in the fourth quarter
Support to student clubs (Abala & Berahle)	Lump sum	-	30%	30%	Assessment & plan completed, 2 clubs supported
Support of tutorial classes for poor-performance students	Lump sum	-	50%	50%	First semester round of tutorial classes completed
Computer training for civil servants in Sekota	Months	4	1	2	Interrupted for two months
Training and experience sharing for PTA members (Sekota)	Num	2	2=100%	2=100%	Training and experience-sharing completed
Experience sharing for civil servants	Num	1	1=100%	1=100%	Completed
Training for school directors	Num	1	1=100%	1=100%	Completed
Support to student clubs (Sekota)	Lump	-	15%	15%	Assessment & plan completed
Concert and show in Sekota high school	Lump sum	-	40%	40%	Concert & cultural event in Sekota
Support to adult education programmes	Months	8	3	5	Activity ongoing with supervision.

2 IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Coordination with local partners

In January COOPI held meetings with the communities of Shimedir, Tsemera, Ziwna and Jerba to discuss again and agree on their expected contribution to the construction of new classrooms. A representative of Sekota Woreda education office participated with COOPI staff. In February and March, COOPI held many consecutive informal meetings in the same sites with representatives of the school and Kebele administrations, to discuss on the progress of the works, and demand the respect of their promises. Similar meetings were held also in Hidmo and As Gubi in Afar. In both sites the local communities contributed their agreed share to the project, albeit with some delays. During the preparation of the software activities, COOPI staff also consulted the education experts of the concerned Woreda, discussing together objectives, targets, topics, methodologies and schedule of each activity. In most of the trainings COOPI involved some selected experts as trainers or facilitators. Experts from Wag Himra Zone education office have been involved in the training for school directors and in the experience-sharing visit to Dessie

and Kombolcha (see below). In general, the relation between COOPI and the Woreda authorities has been very satisfactory throughout the quarter. The high frequency of meetings and discussions, and the common involvement in most of the project activities, established a friendly and collaborative environment.

In February COOPI contacted Mekele's College of Teacher Education looking for trainers for the school directors in Sekota. Although in that occasion there was not any available qualified person, COOPI staff established some preliminary contacts, and this institution may become an useful partner for future activities.

2.2 Staff, equipment and materials

A new COOPI project started its operations in Afar Zone 2 in February 2008. At the same time, COOPI closed the former office / guest house in Mekele to rent a new, more spacious office. The two projects established a cost-allocation system for all those expenses related to the shared office. According to this, one watchman and two cleaners, previously hired by this project, are covered by the new one since March. All rents and service costs for offices and guest houses in Mekele, Abala and Berahle are now shared: 25% is covered by this project, 75% by the new one.

During the quarter the project did not hire any new employee.

The two motorbikes for Sekota were purchased at the beginning of March and sent from Addis Ababa to Sekota in mid-March. They are now used during the supervision of the construction sites. The project received a new semi-axis from Italy in March, to substitute the welded one in the older project car (35-705) (see the second quarter report). Since then, this vehicle is used regularly for supervision in Abala and Berahle Woredas.

2.3 Activities planned and accomplished in the quarter

Abala primary school fence construction

The construction of the fence has been completed in March. During January and February the contractor completed the masonry work, fixed the angled-iron bars on the wall, fixed seven layers of barbed wire to the bars, and plastered the top of the wall. A main iron gate for cars (3 x 2 m) and a smaller gate for people (1 x 2 m) were fabricated at a local workshop. The contractor built three columns in masonry work (0.6 x 0.6 x 2.4 m) at the entrance of the fence to support the two gates; they were put in place during February.

The works could have been completed at the end of February; nevertheless at that moment the land row described in the previous report had not been solved yet. A final round of discussion between the two landlords, the Woreda Administration and the school took place: one of them agreed to cede part of his plot, and the respective section of the fence was built at the beginning of March; instead the second one was finally allowed to keep his garden for three further years. After this period has elapsed the ownership of the land will return to the school. The last section of the fence (around 40 m) will be constructed by the school administration at that moment. COOPI handed over to the school the angled-iron bars and the barbed wire that had been already purchased for this tract of the fence, and considered the construction completed.

The fence has been officially handed over to the school at the end of March.

Berhale school fence construction

The construction of the fence went on steadily during January and was completed at the end of that month. Six truckloads of stones and two truckloads of sand were transported to the site to complement the materials brought as contribution by the community. Two iron gates, supported by three masonry columns (exactly as in Abala, see above), were put in place at the end of the month. After the construction, the total perimeter of the fence resulted 324.5 m.

The fence has been handed over to the school administration at the beginning of February. Some problems arose because small goats were passing between the fence wall and the lower level of barbed wire (with a gap of 20 cm). After some days the school administration autonomously decided to close this gap with stones and thorn plants.

Hidmo school construction

The construction of the classroom block at Hidmo went on during the quarter. A meeting was held in January with members of the Kebele council and household heads of Hidmo. Approximately 50 people participated to the discussion. A major point of concern was the slowness of the community in extracting the stones needed to build the walls. The participants reiterated their commitment (taken in October) to provide freely the required amount of stones. Apart from some minor delays occurred in February, the community complied on time with its promise.

In mid-January COOPI awarded a contract to a local mason to build the classroom walls. COOPI provided the materials (cement and sand), while the contractor was responsible of supervising the works and cover the costs of the workforce. The total volume of masonry work was 104.5 m³; the agreed price was 280 Birr per m³, for a total price of 29,260 Birr. The chosen construction technique was masonry wall with stones and mortar (cement/sand ratio 1:4); the walls would be 50 cm thick and 2.8 m high. In each classroom, space would be left for one door (1 x 2.8 m) and two ventilation windows (1.2 x 1 m) on the front side, and for four windows (1 x 1.6 m) on the back side.

The works required quite a long period to be completed, because each stone had to be shaped separately, and the construction had to be done accurately to avoid cracks or structural damages in the future. The contractor asked two months to complete the walling; nevertheless in February and at the beginning of March there was shortage of water because of Abala's water supply malfunctioning, and the works had to be stopped for some days. The walling was completed around March 20th; subsequently, half of the form work for the top tie was prepared. The top tie beam will run over the external walls, and also over the central partition, which divides the two sections of the building at different height. The beam will be done in reinforced concrete (cement/sand/gravel ratio 1:3:4) with 12mm-diameter re-bars; its section will be 50 x 20 cm as the great beam.

The construction will be completed in the coming quarter.

As Gubi school construction

Two expert masons were employed in January to carry out the construction works at the school. These masons will also manage and control the whole process of construction in the site along with COOPI's technical expert. These responsibilities may include managing daily labourers, controlling the use of construction materials, reporting work progress and status of construction materials and collaborating with local administration.

The masons spent the first week collecting and dressing stones to be used for foundation walling; in the second and third week they built the foundation walls with masonry work (stones and mortar). The wall is 40 cm deep below ground level, and its thickness is 50 cm for the external walls and 40 cm for the internal partitions. The great beam has been built in reinforced concrete with 12-mm re-bars. The section of the great beam is 50 x 20 cm for the external walls and 40 x 20 cm for the internal partitions. The beam was completed at the beginning of February.

Subsequently the masons went ahead with the construction of the pillars. The structures is composed of a total of 23 pillars: one pillar at each corner of the four classrooms (10 in total), one pillar between each of the corner pillars along the external walls (10 in total) and three pillars in the middle of each internal partition. These three pillars were added to the plan because the hollow-block walls envisaged for this school is not as solid as the masonry walls that have been built in Hidmo. Preparation of the form work with timber and filling with concrete took almost three weeks, because it was carried out in two shifts.

At the end of February, and beginning of March, COOPI purchased in Mekele and sent to As Gubi 2,180 pieces of

concrete hollow blocks 20 x 20 x 40 cm each. The supplier was selected after consulting several enterprises, and was chosen for the quality and strength of its blocks, made with first-grade cement. The masons built up and completed the external walls and the partitions in March. The walling was carried out using mortar with uniform ratio 1:4 (cement/sand).

The construction will be completed in the coming quarter.

Guben water point

A mason was employed in mid-February to build two basements for the water tankers and to plaster the water-harvesting scheme (*birka*). Local labour was employed to collect and transport stones, sand and water. The work was completed in mid-February. The dimensions of each basement are 4 x 4 x 0.6 m; their foundations have been built in 50 cm-thick masonry work, they have been filled with stones, and covered with a thin layer of mortar. The *birka* has been plastered with mortar of 1:3 ratio, with two different layers, for a total average thickness of 3 cm. The floor of the birka has been filled with a layer of concrete, 5 cm thick.

In the fourth quarter the construction of the roof catchment will be completed: this implies purchasing and transporting to the site the water tankers, fixing special gutters along the roof and connecting them to the tankers.

Sekota Medhane Alem school rehabilitation

The rehabilitation works in Medhane Alem primary school were completed on the first week of February. Four of the total six classrooms were rehabilitated during the quarter. The school administration proposed COOPI to maintain also the floors of the verandas of the rehabilitated classroom blocks; nevertheless the available budget had already been fully used. Therefore COOPI handed over the work to the responsible bodies.

Sekota high school latrine construction

The plan for the latrines at Sekota high school latrine construction had been prepared at the end of December. The structure is designed to include 12 separate toilets, instead of 14 as initially planned, taking into consideration the increasing costs of construction materials. The general plan is as follow:

- the latrine pit will be 5m deep, 8m long and 3.6 wide;
- the pit will be walled by masonry work of 50cm thickness;
- the pit will be closed by a slab in reinforced concrete, with 30cm-spaced, double-layer mesh made of 12mm re-bars. The thickness of the slab will be 20 cm.;
- two supporting pillars, 5 x 0.3 x 0.3 m, will sustain the slab from within the pit;
- eight thinner pillars, 0.22 x 0.22 x 2.4 m, will strengthen the external walls and sustain the roof;
- the external and partition walls will be built using concrete hollow blocks;
- there will be one manhole for discharging;
- there will be twelve iron doors;
- The roof will include a structure of eucalyptus poles and a covering layer of corrugated iron sheets.

The latrines have been designed to be a permanent structure with quality levels in line with governmental standards for high schools. The internal volume of the pit after walling will be around 91 m³; once filled, the pit can be emptied, calling the sewage disposal service in Weldiya, and utilised again.

The excavation started at the end of January and was completed in mid-February. Building the internal walls of the pit took three consecutive weeks and ended in mid-March. The total walled volume is 53 m³. In the last two weeks of March, the masons prepared the form work for the two supporting pillars, and filled the footings of both pillars with concrete (0.7 x 0.7 x 0.2 m). At the same time, the re-bars for the slab and the eight external

pillars were made ready for the successive phase of the construction. The works will go ahead steadily in April and May, and will be completed before the end of the fourth quarter.

Classroom construction in Shimedir, Tsemera, Ziwna, Jerba

COOPI planned to start the construction works in Sekota Woreda during the third quarter. Previously the project staff was communicating about the school construction with representatives of the school community (teachers, parent-teachers association members, Kebele leaders, and education & training board members). In January, COOPI organised instead general meetings with all the community adult members, to mobilize and discuss on the planned physical activities, and on the promised community contribution. Such meetings were held in each of the four targeted schools (Jerba, Shimedir, Tsemera, and Ziwna). COOPI and the communities agreed on a deadline to provide all the materials and support promised as contribution. The following table summarises the results of these meetings.

Table 2 Agreed community contribution for Sekota Woreda construction sites

No	School	Agreed contribution	Deadline
1	Jerba	Stone, sand (by payment), straw, water, and labour to transport industrial materials	March 20, 2008
2	Shimedir	Stone, sand, straw, water, and dismantling & clearing of building site	February 13, 2008
3	Tsemera	Stone, straw, water, and four daily labourers for each day during construction time	March 10, 2008
4	Ziwna	Stone, straw, water, and daily labourers for minor works	February 23, 2008

In February, COOPI carried out several visits to the four sites to assess the progress in the supply of construction materials. These visits were made together with a representative of Sekota Woreda education office. In general, the response of the communities was very slow and insufficient; the project staff week by week visited the sites to push the school administration and the Kebele leaders to start their work, without success. One main reason of this failure is that, although the communities had promised since October to contribute freely to the project without any retribution, in fact they were expecting support from the governmental Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). The PSNP is a sort of food-for-work scheme, where the most disadvantaged and food insecure members of the community engage in public works (as road maintenance, terracing, or construction), for a fixed number of days in a year, to receive a certain amount of food items. In all the communities, the leaders thought that the contribution to the project would be given by the PSNP beneficiaries, allocating a quota of the total number of working days to this task. COOPI had not been informed at all of this plan, and came to know it in February, after asking justification for the delays. In fact, the PSNP was supposed to start in January, but it was delayed to March in Sekota Woreda; furthermore the leaders of the program had also planned other development works for this year; therefore the number of working days finally allocated for the community contribution was really small, in one case only three or four days.

COOPI continued to push the communities in March to obtain the promised contribution; the supply of stones was of particular concern, because it is indispensable to start the works building the foundations, and also because the total requested quantity, 250 m³ in each site, would require the joint coordination of the community during several days. Finally, the project staff decided not to wait any more, and to start excavating the

foundations. This work was accomplished before the end of March in three sites: Shimedir, Tsemere and Ziwna. Starting the work was compulsory, because the project was running out of time; and yet, this decision will further discourage the beneficiaries to provide their contribution, because they will probably consider that, as COOPI has already started the construction, it will not interrupt it, and will go ahead anyway, even paying for what had been previously promised for free.

In March, the community of Jerba informed COOPI of its decision to shift the construction site from the agreed one, inside the existing school compound, to a new site two kilometres away, where the new central village of the Kebele is supposed to be established. COOPI gave a new deadline of 15 days to the community to transport the agreed quantity of sand and stones to the new site. This agreement was concluded during the last week of March. COOPI is going to check the accomplishments of the community at the beginning of April, and is considering to abandon the site if their promise were not fulfilled.

Another point of concern is a steep increase of the costs of construction materials recorded since February. This has been triggered by a previous increase of fuel prices at the end of January, but is also linked to the general trends in world markets, especially for iron products. COOPI is currently adjusting the expenditure forecasts for the four constructions works, and may consider a revision of the plans if the prices continue to increase during the coming months.

Shimedir HDW construction

Shimedir primary school is one of the four schools under Sekota Woreda education office where the project has planned to implement hardware activities. In Shimedir, beside to classroom construction, the excavation of a hand-dug well (HDW) with a hand pump was also proposed to supply the school and the surrounding community with potable water. A geophysics survey had been conducted in August in two sites around Shimedir, identifying a suitable spot ten meters beside a river bed, and only 300 meters away from the school. The excavation started in March: 21 m³ of soil, up to 3 m of depth, have already been excavated on this month. The diameter of the pit is 3 m. Water has not been struck yet, but the soil is promisingly moist. The excavation will continue in April until reaching the underlying hard basalt formation, which is expected to be found at eight or nine meters of depth.

Purchase of motorbike for supervision in Berahle

The process for the purchase of the motorbike in Addis Ababa ended in mid-January, and the motorbike was successfully transported in Mekele at the end of the month. The motorbike was transported to Berahle at the beginning of February and handed over to the Woreda education office. This new vehicle is expected to improve the support and supervision of distant schools by the supervisors of the office.

Computer training for civil servants in Abala

The computer training started in at the beginning of January. The participants are seven civil servants of Abala education office; the course is focused on basic usage of MS Windows, MS Word, MS Excel, Power Geez / Visual Geez, and MS Access. The training is taking place in the computer laboratory of Abala high school; the trainer is the laboratory supervisor of the school. COOPI monitored strictly the training during the first month, giving various suggestions to the trainer on how to improve the quality of its lessons. A mid-term evaluation of the training was held in the presence of the computer trainees at the end of February. Some of the drawbacks mentioned by the trainees were: no hand out had been provided for reference; sufficient theoretical discussion at the beginning of every topic and subtopic was missing; lack of computer in their office to practice the lesson; and no make-up classes are arranged for absentees. On the other hand, the timeliness of the trainer and the

trainees has improved. Also the willingness by many trainees to learn and know about ICT is evaluated to be good. Accordingly, training handouts have been prepared and distributed to all the participants in March. Except for some power interruption, there has been no major obstacle. As per the schedule, the training is expected to come to its end towards the end of April. The computer and printer purchased by COOPI will be handed over to Abala's education office in May after the end of the training.

Training to members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs) (Abala)

The training to members of parent-teacher association was conducted separately in Abala and in Berahle Woredas.

In Abala, a total of 39 participants drawn from 13 formal schools in the Woreda participated in the training; for each school, two parents and one teacher, all members of the PTA, were selected. The training lasted four days, from January 24th to 27th, 2008. The administration of the Zone provided a training hall, and two experts from the Woreda education office conducted the training. It mainly focused on: community participation in running school affairs, school level planning and implementation, school administration and management, resource mobilization and utilization at school and related topics. The participants contributed to the lectures of the trainers recounting previous positive experiences, or explaining pending problems in their respective schools. Information obtained from trainees, trainers and organizers of the training after its completion indicates that the participants drew significant lessons from it.

The training in Berahle took place from February 14th to 17th, 2008. The participants included 30 members of the PTAs (one parent and one teacher for each of the 15 formal schools in the Woreda) and also 9 members of the Education and Training Boards (ETB), one for each of the 9 Kebeles in the Woreda. The ETB is an institution at Kebele level, composed of representatives of the local communities, which supervises the overall functioning of the schools in the Kebele; the PTA is specific to each single school, includes both parents and teachers, and is more involved in day-to-day duties, as school maintenance or expansion, discussion with the families of dropping-out students, and so on. The ETB members were included in Berahle following a request of the Woreda education office.

The major topics dealt with during the training were similar to those in Abala: community participation regarding school affairs; planning and implementation of projects at school level; school administration and management; and resource mobilization and utilization. Two experts from the Woreda education office have served as trainers, and the office head served as facilitator and translator during the session. The trainers organised also some group discussion sessions, allowing the participants to share their different experiences in their respective schools.

Support to student clubs (Abala & Berahle)

COOPI collected various information on the existing student clubs in Abala and Berahle Woreda during December and January. An open-ended questionnaire was prepared and distributed between the biggest schools of both Woredas. It was collected after compilation by the club leaders (teachers assigned to animate one or more clubs in each school) and analysed during February. Most of the clubs proposed COOPI to purchase for them various useful items, as balls, pumps and nets for sport clubs, microphones and recording tapes for mini-media clubs, and so on. As the number and extent of the requests was well above the assigned budget, COOPI made a selection at the end of February, giving priority to some schools and clubs. In general, bigger, town-based schools were prioritized; among these, clubs with more members and with a good record of activity were preferred to smaller and less active ones.

In the end, COOPI selected five clubs in Abala Woreda, and five in Berahle Woreda. Apart from several sport clubs, and some mini-media and HIV clubs, COOPI decided to support also a small library for girl students, opened freely in Abala town by a private citizen, and the acrobatic group of Berahle. Although these are not precisely student clubs linked to a specific school, they both reunite together children and students during their

spare time for some interesting and useful activities, and are worthy of support.

After preparing a detailed action plan for the support to each club, COOPI started the implementation of the activity in March. The sport club of Abala school's cluster received various items to perform football, volleyball, run, javelin throw, and other sports. The girls' library of Abala received books, maps, teaching posters, tables and chairs. The other clubs will receive the selected materials in April and May.

Provision of tutorial classes to poorly-performing students

COOPI organised tutorial classes in five schools during this quarter. The tutorial classes were meant to support poor-performance students, in particular girls, by allowing them to repeat some difficult topics in a smaller group and a calmer environment than during normal classes. The selected period fell between January and February and coincided with the end of the first academic semester. COOPI staff discussed with the directors of each school, and they selected together the grades and subjects targeted by the tutorial classes. Each school took the responsibility of organising a plan and assigning teachers to cover the prescribed number of hours in a week for each selected subject.

The table below summarises the implementation of the activity:

Table 3 Tutorial classes plan (first semester)

School	Subject	Grades	Duration
Abala 2 nd cycle school	Maths	5 th , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th	7 weeks
	English	5 th , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th	7 weeks
Abala high school	Maths	10 th , 12 th	see below
	English	10 th , 12 th	see below
	Physics	10 th , 12 th	see below
	Chemistry	10 th , 12 th	see below
	Biology	10 th , 12 th	see below
Tayara Bora 2 nd cycle school	Maths	5 th , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th	5 weeks
	English	5 th , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th	5 weeks
Tayara Bora high school	Maths	9 th , 10 th	5 weeks
	English	9 th , 10 th	5 weeks
	Physics	9 th , 10 th	5 weeks
	Chemistry	9 th , 10 th	5 weeks
	History	9 th , 10 th	5 weeks
Shai Gubi primary school	Maths	4 th , 5 th , 6 th	5 weeks
	English	4 th , 5 th , 6 th	5 weeks
	Integrated Sciences	5 th , 6 th	5 weeks

The tutorial classes at Abala 2nd cycle school went on from January 7th to February 22, 2008. In every school in

Berahle Woreda the tutorial classes started on January 21st and went on until February 24th. In Abala high school the tutorial classes were divided in two sessions: first two weeks from January 7th to January 18th; after three weeks from February 18th to March 7th. Students of 10th and 12th grade were preferred because they will go through the national examinations at the end of the year.

The number of weekly hours for each subject varied between two and four. The average class size was 25 students, much lower than the figure of 50/60, usually found in normal classes. This reduced noise and distractions, and increased the efficacy of the lessons. In both high schools some low-performing boys were also allowed to attend the tutorial classes, as the number of girls was very low.

All the tutorial classes were given by teachers of the schools, in the morning or in the afternoon in order to avoid overlapping with normal classes. COOPI gave them an hourly payment for this service, varying from 15 to 30 birr according to their academic level, and to the weather conditions and hardships of their working site.

COOPI staff followed up the activity visiting the schools week by week, verifying with the school directors the respect of the agreed plan, assisting to some tutorial classes and giving advices to the teachers if needed. COOPI prepared also a reporting format and distributed it in the schools at the end of the activity. Each school submitted its own report in March; the collected information will be useful to improve the implementation of the second session of tutorial classes planned for May and June.

Computer training for civil servants in Sekota

The computer training went ahead normally during January, but was stopped at the beginning of February, because the attendance rate dropped consistently during the previous weeks. In February and March most of the education experts have been out of town to participate in some governmental trainings and in COOPI's experience sharing visit. During mid-March COOPI discussed with both education offices on how to reorganise the training and improve the attendance rate. Finally the trainees identified the best training time discussing with their respective office personnel and the training recommenced on the last week of March. It is supposed to continue two more months and finish at the end of May.

Training and experience-sharing for members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs) (Sekota)

The parent-teacher associations are supposed to play an important role in their schools, creating a link between teachers and local population, monitoring the quality of education, mustering community participation in school expansion and maintenance, tackling early drop-out. Nevertheless most of their members, particularly the parents, have not yet a clear idea of their duties and lack experience and method.

COOPI had already organised a short training in October for PTAs in Sekota City Administration to brief their members on their main responsibilities. In March COOPI carried out a second, more specific training, including also some schools in Sekota Woreda. The main topics were:

- community participation in the school affairs; initiative, relevance, and ways of participating;
- duties of Kebele Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and of PTAs;
- annual educational plan preparation and implementation;
- educational guidance and administration at school level.

There were 29 participants from all the six formal schools in Sekota City Administration, and 38 participants from COOPI's eight intervention schools in Sekota Woreda. Three trainers were selected between the education experts of both districts. The training lasted three days, from March 10th to March 12th, 2008.

COOPI organised also an experience-sharing visit in three Woredas, Kobo, Meket and Lasta (Lalibela) in North Wello Zone. 19 people from Sekota Woreda and 10 people from Sekota City Administration were selected between the participants of the training for this visit. Two facilitators, one from each education office, lead the visit. The group visited three model schools in these Woredas. The program of each visit was:

- general introduction on the school by the director;
- visit to offices, classrooms, library and other facilities;
- presentation of main school documents;
- presentation of main school activities, one by one, by various teachers;
- common discussion between visitors, school staff, and community representatives.

The main focus of the visit was on community participation and involvement in school's affairs. The visited schools were selected by the respective Woreda education office between those where community participation had been stronger during the previous years.

The visit took place immediately after the end of the training, from March 13th to March 15th, 2008. A bus was rented to transport the participants to the selected Woredas and back to Sekota.

Experience sharing for civil servants (Sekota)

An experience-sharing visit for the education experts of Sekota City Administration and Sekota Woreda was conducted in February. The objective of the activity was to bring the civil servants to bigger, more performant Woredas with a stronger education system and better schools. COOPI selected South Wello Zone as the destination for the visit; after a discussion with the education office of the Zone, Kombolcha City Administration and Dessie Woreda were identified as the districts with the best record on education in the last year.

The organisation of the activity went on through January with the following steps:

- identification of key topics and focus points for school visits and discussions;
- communication in advance to Dessie and Kombolcha's education offices of the proposed topics (to allow time for preparation);
- agreement with all concerned offices on schedule and travel plan.

The experience-sharing visit was initially planned at the end of January, but had to be postponed twice, because of other meetings and workshops occurring in the same period. Finally, it was scheduled for mid-February. Eight experts from Sekota City Administration visited Kombolcha City Administration between February 14th and February 16th, while six experts from Sekota Woreda visited Dessie Woreda between February 18th and February 20th. COOPI rented a 4WD vehicle for the whole period to easily transport the participants. COOPI staff participated to both visits.

Each group visited five different schools in the target Woreda. The schools were selected for their positive performances, the quality of their education, the number and quality of their structures, and the ability of their directors and staff. Their list is proposed below:

Table 4 Visited schools in Kombolcha and Dessie

No	Kombolcha City Administration	Dessie Woreda
1	Kombolcha No 1 junior school	Chirecha junior school (grade 1-8)
2	Kombolcha high and preparatory school	Dajole elementary school (grade 1-4)
3	Alternative school (managed by NGO)	Bilido alternative school
4	Salayish junior school (private)	Gelsha junior school (grade 1-8)
5	Salayish Kindergarten (private)	Yito satellite school

The program of the visits in each school was similar to the experience-sharing visit organised for the PTAs (see above). The school staff was well prepared, and ready to answer quickly to any question related to the schools. The three days of visit were very intense and brought new lessons and experience both to the education experts and to COOPI staff.

The main points of focus and discussion during the visit to Kombolcha City Administration were:

- implementation of school improvement packages;
- relation between education experts, cluster supervisors & school directors;
- performance of informal education;
- support and follow up of night education schemes;
- systems used to enrol all school-age children;
- performance and effectiveness of school clusters;

The focal points in Dessie Woreda were:

- implementation of school improvement packages;
- performance of trained supervisors and school directors;
- transfer and allotment of teachers;
- school finance management;
- incentive systems for teachers;
- progress on extension of primary education for every child;
- information management systems and reporting systems

Training for school directors

A main software activity accomplished during this quarter was the training of school directors. Three senior trainers were expected to come from Dessie's Teacher Education College; first they promised to participate, but eventually did not come due to other urgent tasks. COOPI as an alternative recruited four trainers from the Zone education office and four facilitators from both Woreda education offices, to train the directors on specific topics taking turns. Apart from school directors, cluster supervisors and vice-directors of big schools were also trained, for a total of 80 participants.

The trainees were divided in two categories; the first one was composed of already trained school directors, entitled for a refreshment training for four days; the second group was composed of teachers who are working as school directors, but did not receive any formal training on school directorship. These teachers were entitled to eleven consecutive days of intensive training. It covered in short the major topics dealt in formal school director trainings offered by the teachers' education colleges.

The refreshment took place between February 26th and February 29th; the main training went on from February 26th to March 7th.

The overall accomplishment of the training is narrated in Annex I.

Support to student clubs (Sekota)

Support to school clubs activities had been started in December with collection of basic data on each intervention schools. These data were analysed during January and February. Material support, awareness creation, trainings inviting relevant experts, and financial support were between the proposed forms of support during the need assessment. However, provision of material was the most requested support by the schools. Accordingly, a part of the total budget was allocated for intervention in each school and club. Priority was given to bigger schools and to more active, developed clubs. A draft action plan was presented in March to the schools,

and a final round of discussion took place with concerned club leaders and school directors, before reaching a final version. The purchase and delivery of materials for the clubs will start since the first week of April.

Concert and show at Sekota high school

As part of the activity on “Specific trainings and cultural activities in Sekota High School”, a concert promoting awareness on adult education, sanitation and hygiene, and visibility of COOPI's activities in the zone was performed in a very colourful way on February 16, 2008, at Sekota high school. The concert was held on the parents' day of the school. A number of offices and associations participated on the successful accomplishment of this concert: the Zone culture and tourism department, Sekota high school's mini-media & health clubs, Sekota City Administration education office, Kebele 2 administration, and Sekota's women association played different roles in organizing and presenting shows and speeches during the concert. The program of the concert included:

- presentation of works of poem and essay competition winners (1st, 2nd, & 3rd) on sanitation, hygiene and adult education issues;
- three drama shows on adult education and hygiene issues;
- different traditional music and dance shows by Wag Himra zone's cultural group;
- speeches by different key figures of the community on the importance of adult education, sanitation and public hygiene;
- issues related to school and education.

Two drama shows were performed by Wag Himra Zone's cultural group; the third was prepared by Sekota high school's health club. Each participating student was awarded a high-quality English dictionary at the end of the show.

Support to adult education programmes

The adult education programme continued throughout the quarter.. Both education offices collected some data on the attendance of adult students in February and submitted a short report to COOPI. The attendance rate is still low compared to the initial expectations, especially in Sekota City Administration.

Table 5 Adult education attendance, February 2008

No	Name of site	Planned number of students	Registered students			Averagely attending students			Accomplishment (%)	Woreda
			M	F	T	M	F	T		
1	Kebele 01	50	7	95	102	4	8	12	24%	Town
2	Kebele 02 (high school)	50	14	34	48	3	8	11	22%	Town
3	03(Chawu)	50	72	7	79	25	-	25	50%	Town
4	Lay sayda	50	68	5	73	40	-	40	80%	Rural
5	Shimedir	50	25	24	49	16	13	29	58%	Rural
6	Beza	50	14	48	62	10	20	30	60%	Rural

			Registered students			Averagely attending students				
7	Jerba	50	54	20	74	24	19	43	86%	Rural
8	Siriel	50	67	4	71	55	-	55	110%	Rural
9	Ziwna	50	48	2	50	23	2	25	50%	Rural
10	Tsemera	50	48	5	53	29	3	32	64%	Rural
11	Tsitsiru	50	35	-	35	35	-	35	70%	Rural
	Grand Total	550	452	244	696	264	73	337	61.27%	

During January and February, COOPI discussed about the adult education programme with teachers, school directors and Kebele administrators.

Generally, the following challenges have been faced during the implementation of the programme:

- Weakness of the adult education teachers on preparation of long range plans, daily lesson plans, instructional media, and poor way of applying active-learning methods.
- Drop out of trained adult education teachers (five up to now have dropped out since November)
- Low participation of adults
- No comfortable and spacious classrooms for education in most of the schools
- The participants did not acquire independently some necessary materials as notebooks and pens

Some of the solution undertaken were:

- The project assigned to the school directors the responsibility to evaluate and support the adult education teachers on the preparation of long range plans, daily lesson plans, and on the use of active-learning methods.
- The project discussed with education office experts, school directors, Kebele administrators and community representatives on how to mobilise the target communities and increase the participation of adults to the programme.
- Notebooks and pens have been purchased (see below)
- Dropping-out teachers have been replaced

In several sites, the students asked notebooks and pens during the monitoring visits in January, to take notes during classes and exercise at home. Accordingly, in February COOPI provided each teacher with 50 notebooks and pens, to be distributed to the students who attend classes regularly.

Sekota Woreda education office independently organised a one-day refreshment training in February for four adult education teachers of this programme. The training was held by the supervisor of Shimedir's school cluster, for the teachers of Shimedir, Lay Sayda, Beza, and Jerba, and was a shorter review of the key principles and methodologies of adult education.

The adult education programme went on satisfactorily in March. The number of attending students increased slightly as compared to February. The increase of the attendance rate in February and March as compared to the initial months of the programme is probably linked to the closure of the harvesting season in January. The slack period should continue in the fourth quarter through April and May. The attendance data for March, reported by the adult education teachers through the education offices, are shown below.

Table 6 Adult education attendance, March 2008

No	Name of site	Planned number of students	Registered students			Averagely attending students			Accomplishment (%)	Woreda
			M	F	T	M	F	T		
1	Kebele 01	50	7	95	102	4	8	12	24%	Town
2	Kebele O2 (highschool)	50	14	34	48	5	11	16	32%	Town
3	03(chawu)	50	72	7	79	34	-	34	68%	Town
4	Lay sayda	50	68	5	73	40	-	40	80%	Rural
5	Shimedir	50	25	24	49	22	20	42	84%	Rural
6	Beza	50	14	48	62	10	20	30	60%	Rural
7	Jerba	50	54	20	74	30	19	49	98%	Rural
8	Sireal	50	67	4	71	55	-	55	110%	Rural
9	Ziwna	50	50	2	52	50	2	52	104%	Rural
10	Tsemerna	50	64	6	70	39	3	42	84%	Rural
11	Tsitsru	50	35	-	35	35	-	35	70%	Rural
	G/T	550	470	245	715	324	83	407	74%	

2.4 Activities planned for the next quarter

Table 7 Fourth quarter plan for Sekota area

Activity	Details	April		May		June	
		1-15	16-30	1-15	16-31	1-15	16-30
Physical activities in Sekota Woreda	Completion of the classroom structure						
Physical activities in Sekota City Administration	Completion of the latrines at the high school						
Computer use diffusion	Completion of the training; handover of the computers						
Trainings and experience sharing workshops	Training for accountant & cashiers, for teachers, for civil servants						
Support to student clubs	Support given to 75% of the clubs						
Support to adult education programmes	Supervision of the ongoing education programmes						
Support and cultural activities in Sekota high school	50% of support and activities implemented						

Table 8 Fourth quarter plan for Abala area

Activity	Details	April		May		June	
		1-15	16-30	1-15	16-31	1-15	16-30
Physical activities in Hidmo, As Gubi, Guben	Completion of all the activities						
Computer use diffusion	Training completed, computer handed over						
Trainings and experience sharing workshops	Experience-sharing visits for civil servants & for PTAs						
Support to student clubs	Completed						
Tutorial classes for poor-performance students	Second round of tutorial classes given at the end of the second semester						
Support and cultural activities in Abala and Tayara Bora schools	Completed						

3 EXTERNAL FACTORS

A major concern during the last part of the quarter are the raising costs of construction materials. Whereas these costs fluctuated slowly between October and January, a sharp increase of fuel prices at the end of January triggered a surge of the inflation rate, and of the costs of materials and of transportation. The prices of cement, iron products, and other items are all increasing day by day, faster than the general inflation rate and than the Euro/birr rate of change (see the table below). This trend did not affect the implementation of the activities during the quarter, but if it is not checked it may create budgetary constraints to the project in the coming months.

Table 9 Increases of cement and iron prices, Mekele, December 2007 - March 2008

Material	December 07		February 08		March 08		Increase (in Euro)
	Birr	Euro	Birr	Euro	Birr	Euro	
Cement 2 nd grade	115*	8.49*	125* / 141	9.15* / 10.33	185	13.26	56%
Iron re-bars (12 mm)	106	7.82	-		137	9.82	26%

The prices indicated with (*) are related to purchases directly from the factory. After February these purchases have not been feasible any more, because of increasingly longer waiting lists (several weeks) due to cement shortage in town.

Furthermore, most of the local communities proved to be unreliable in providing timely their contribution to the project. In Afar the requested contribution was lower, and both in Hidmo and As Gubi the communities respected their promises, just with some minor delays. In Sekota Woreda though, the three communities of Shimedir, Tsemerna and Ziwna failed to provide the necessary quantity of stones; in Ziwna water was supposed to be brought freely, but

COOPI is now forced to pay for it; in Tsemere free daily labour was promised, but eventually not provided by the Kebele administration. In Jerba the community looks committed to bring stones and sand as promised, but this process has not been completed yet after the change of site occurred in March.

4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The desk administrator from Milan and the country administrator from Addis Ababa visited the coordination office in Mekele in February. The main objectives of the visit were: to review the expenditures and the accountancy documents until January 31st, 2008; to discuss the implementation plans since February until the end of the project, including an estimation of future expenditures month by month; to update the project senior staff on COOPI's new administrative procedures.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the physical activities in Afar went ahead without any obstacle; the construction in Hidmo slowed down somehow, because of the long time taken for the masonry walling, whereas the works in As Gubi went on quickly beyond the initial expectations. In Sekota though the constructions started very late, because of the sluggishness of the local communities in providing their contribution. The works in Jerba are still blocked, waiting for the beneficiaries to transfer stones and sands to the newly-appointed site.

COOPI should revise its plans to cope with these new circumstances in different ways. Masonry walling may not be a viable option any more for classroom construction in Sekota, because the required stones have not been provided by the communities. Other options as hollow-block walling may be considered. Some ancillary works, like wall plastering, may be cancelled because of increase of the budget allocated for the construction of the main structure. Another way to counteract the rising costs of construction materials could be to cancel a few minor activities and reallocate their budget. The delays described above may be reduced reducing the selection and bargaining time with contractors and masons, and giving incentives to work on weekends.

The software activities were implemented successfully in both areas, with interesting results. The experience-sharing visits in particular provided useful lessons both for the participants and for COOPI's monitoring staff. The tutorial classes in Afar have proved comparatively easy to organise and implement, and cost-effective in providing an important support to big numbers of students. All the trainings included group discussions, active-learning methods and experience-sharing between the participants.

Most of the main software activities have been implemented during this period, and the software part of the project will be easily completed within the coming quarter. In fact, some of the remaining activities appear now to be redundant with previously-implemented ones, or simply not appropriate, or not effective. These include, for instance, the preparation of a database for partner education offices, of the technical training for civil servants in Sekota. These activities may be cancelled, and the human and financial resources initially planned for their implementation may be redirected to better complete other, more relevant activities.