

# **Inquiring the Effectiveness of South Korean-based Scholarship Support programs to Ethiopian School Children**

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## **Introduction**

Despite the massive effort and the apparent success of developing countries in partially achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the education sector is still in need of more attention. For this, donor countries and development partners have been designing and operating support programs and inputting huge amount of financial flows into the developing world. This aid flow is certainly expected to play a significant role particularly in addressing educational and training needs. The supported aid would often be in the form of software or hardware educational supplies ranging from the delivery of teaching-learning materials to the production of learning programs as well as infrastructure and capacity building supplies to educational institutions. A direct provision of financial support to recipients has also become a typical method of educational aid in developing countries. This paper is focused on analyzing the effectiveness of educational assistance that is being provided by South Korean institutions to Ethiopian school children under the category of scholarship support program. Evidence for the analysis is partly provided from replies given to an interview conducted with 42 junior and secondary school female students and 22 school staff members as well as a survey conducted to 440 female students and 36 staff members in six schools in the capital Addis Ababa. The paper concludes that a prolonged financial support to households in the form of a scholarship bursary could end up in family aid dependency and needs an essential monitoring and revision.

## **The issue of Aid Dependency**

According to the Humanitarian Policy Group research report, the word ‘dependency’ is generally seen as something negative and to be avoided, associated with the provision of aid, and contrasted with development approaches (Harvey et al. 2005). Dependency is seen as undermining people’s inventiveness and it is often contrasted with a variety of positive values or terms, notably independence, self-sufficiency, self-reliance and sustainability. Dependency has been perceived as a particular problem when aid assistance has been provided over a prolonged period.

Among ways identified by the report in which the term is used include first, aid risks

creating a dependency mentality or syndrome, making people expect continued assistance which undermines initiative, at individual or community levels; and second, aid undermines local economies, creating a continuing need for aid assistance and trapping people into ongoing or chronic dependency on outside assistance. Accordingly, individuals are said to be aid dependent when they cannot meet their immediate basic needs in the absence of aid assistance.

Development theories also suggest that dependency is the reverse with development approaches that aim at empowerment, participation and sustainability with aid being the major factor (Harvey et al. 2005). A specific concern raised in this context is that aid interventions will undermine ongoing developmental programs. Once people have become accustomed to receiving free commodities, the fear is that they will be less willing to make contributions to community development projects without being paid (Harvey et al. 2005). Aid dependency often tends to make individuals unlikely to progress to find their own way of self-supported development. It makes them less inclined to save, to invest, to produce goods for export or domestic consumption, or even to work (ActionAid 2011). So despite the benefits of aid to poor people in poor countries, aid dependency definitely could have negative impacts. Hence, it is worth examining aid dependency more closely. Aid needs to be given in such a way that it supports poor countries to lead their own development, be more accountable to their own people, and mobilize more of their own resources, and then aid itself contributes to reducing aid dependency.

### **Issues surrounding scholarship aid support**

Most of South Korea's educational support to Ethiopia is focused on supporting areas where Korean War veterans have settled down after returning from Korea. The survey under consideration in this paper was conducted at six schools in the areas of the capital where scholarship programs are under operation. Interview with beneficiary parents indicated that the scholarship bursary provided to school children is fully becoming a substitute income for families to depend on. Most parents in the interview told that they have given up their income generating works after they started to get the scholarship supports. This shows that the original purpose of scholarship funds has significantly been deviated to become a full source of income for the survival of recipient households. This does not mean that supporting a poverty-stricken household per se is seen as a problem, but to point out the fact that most of the money spent in the name of educational support for school children is being misused in creating more families to become highly dependent on it by even abandoning their income generating jobs. Respondents told that they gave up their jobs such as small-sized business, cook, janitor, security guard and daily labor works after they began beneficiaries of the programs. Such aid dependency could simply be evaluated as undermining people's motivation to involve in

employment for self-sufficiency, self-reliance and sustainability which are the foundations of the nation's economy.

Basically, apart from school materials provided as part of the support programs, it was found that very minute amount of money was directly spent on the academic affairs of the children. This shows the continuing dependence of parents or guardians of the recipient school children to fully sustain their living on the scholarship bursary. There follows the concern that parents might be misusing their children's stipends as a substitute for income generation of the household. This further deepens unemployment and lack of economic opportunities to increase participants' ability to generate income and secure livelihoods on their own. As a result, work motivation of parents was found to have highly diminished making them to become a mere consumer, thus affecting the mentality of the children. This situation has widely spread deep into the communities and more parents were found to be looking for financial support to their children. Interviews conducted among female secondary students revealed that they have a low self-esteem towards themselves without having any dream for their future life. The role of parents and school teachers on the career aspirations of their children was found to be significantly low. The students had no sensible reason about their choices of future career during the interviews.

According to Samsung Dream scholarship foundation<sup>1</sup> which is one of the major financial sources of various educational support programs, the following three types of programs stand as core initiatives. The first category is educational support programs focused on providing students who lack educational support due to regional, social, and financial issues with proper, high-quality education. The second category is local educational welfare programs that emphasize targeting educationally substandard regions or areas and the third category being professional educational welfare programs that intend to create and expand programs serving as a model at the public level. Another non-governmental organization, World Together Korea<sup>2</sup> states that its main activity involves in providing educational opportunity to receive education consistently and support the poor to grow fine social member and end poverty. Accordingly, one of the several programs being carried out is a scholarship support providing educational supports and scholarships to children those who are suffering from lacking of lacking of educational opportunities due to their poverty.

The arguments of this paper are not opposing to the fact that supporting households financially is wrong on its own, rather questioning whether the financial support aimed for the school children is being used as per the original arrangement to help the child recipient's educational situations. As the children are under-aged who could be unable to manage their own bank accounts, it is often the case that parents or guardians directly take charge of the scholarship bursary. On one hand, it could be correct to claim that the wellbeing of the household is also the wellbeing of the children. Undernourishment is the major problem of

school children in Ethiopia. Parents have the responsibility to provide their children with an environment suitable for their school life including food and proper health care. In this aspect, the situation for most of sub-Saharan African countries such as Ethiopia is the worst.

However, the Ethiopian government has been doing much effort to increase educational participation through various incentives such as abolishing of school fees. Ethiopia is one of the few African countries with rapidly growing economy that more parents became interested gaining quality education to their children at costly private educational institutions. However, low income households are still struggling to sustain their livelihoods by any means of income that includes making their living from the aid assistance given to children. The survey conducted indicates that 45 to 50 percent of the respondents told that either their father or mother or any other family member has no income. During the interview, some students told that they live with guardians who are mostly their relatives and at times completely strangers. More than 60 percent of the female student respondents told that they spend most of their after-school time engaged in house chores that their parents or guardians expect them to do daily. They explained that extended hours of house chores often makes them too much occupied and become exhausted that it is difficult for them to focus on their study and spend their time in after-school academic or extracurricular activities.

On the other hand, it is generally anticipated that an additional amount of financial support to a family through children school support programs will inevitably be of great help. The challenging fact is that this financial support is hindering low income parents from being engaged in their own ordinary income generating activities. For many reasons, this education aid could be considered as pampering the minds of many parents to run an easy life through the dependency on the financial disburse. This in turn will result in the children to be left without a parent that could be a role model for their future career. Incompetency among parents results in children's low esteem and imprecise attitude towards their future career. Both in the interviews and in the survey more than 90 percent of the respondents told that their future dream is to become a medical doctor or an engineer. But none of them was able to explain the reason for their choice as well as about the academic requirements of becoming a doctor or an engineer. They just replied that it is because their parents want them to be so.

When such financial disburse is extended wider, it is believed that the culture of aid dependency will be widely accustomed by the community leaving the youth to become impotent. In other words, their motivation for job creativity and productivity will be diminished. Educational aid should play its role in building the capacity of the recipients in education that increases the technical skills and expertise of the individuals involved.

## **Conclusion**

In-country education, training or support aid is advantageous in many aspects as it can offer

culturally appropriate, accessible, affordable, relevant and grounded education and training to more number of recipients. Scholarship programs need to embrace all kinds of the society including secondary school and college students, community members around schools, government institutions and other community based organizations. It is undeniable that scholarship supports are able to provide a remarkable life-changing potential opportunity for those who can use it wisely to pave way for future lives. Therefore, it is essential to raise awareness of the local public about the setbacks of support aid that leave households dependent on the scholarship bursary without bringing any impact on the educational career of the children. Basically education aid should be something that provides additional funding for education by adding to and/or helping to mobilize more domestic resources into action through a strategic allocation to maximize the effectiveness. More effort is needed to be expended to maintain and institutionalize the programs locally so that they can bring the targeted outcomes.

There needs to be a genuine discussion on the evaluation of financial support to school children in the name of scholarships as an aid instrument and how to improve their effectiveness. It is not only the amount of education aid provided which is important but also the coordination and cooperation among partners in undertaking initiatives and delivering aid for a better outcome. So far, it is difficult to see the scholarship programs prove their effectiveness, with little evidence of its impact beyond anecdotal evidence of individual success stories. Inquiries into the effectiveness, delivery models, recruitment procedures, fairness and value for money are all issues to be addressed in the whole process. One particularly important dimension of bringing the expected improvement from both the recipient and donor sides is efforts for better monitoring and evaluation which will allow recipients not only to show results to donors, but also improve education results of children over time. Monitoring and evaluation of the scholarship programs could need long time frames for assessing the full impact.

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### Notes

1 <http://www.sdream.or.kr/eng/wwd/wwd03.html> (retrieved on August 17, 2015)

2 [http://www.worldtogether.or.kr/en/bbs/board.php?bo\\_table=b02\\_03](http://www.worldtogether.or.kr/en/bbs/board.php?bo_table=b02_03) (retrieved on August 17, 2015)