FAMILY LITERACY, INDIGENOUS LEARNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA

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This study report is part of a larger research programme, the Global Research Translation Award: Meeting the SDGs: creating innovative infrastructures and policy solutions to support sustainable development in Global South communities. The University of East Anglia's (UEA) Global Research Translation Award (GRTA) sets out to help tackle health, nutrition, education and environment issues in developing countries. The GRTA has been funded as part of the UK government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Innovation and Commercialisation Programme, developed to fast-track promising research findings into real-world solutions. The overarching project comprises four interconnected sub-projects addressing child malnutrition, sustainable food systems, family literacy and microplastic pollution. These projects work across disciplines and scales, supporting the strengthening of capacities at multiple levels – from communities to implementers, researchers, universities, media agencies, industry and policy makers, with a view to long-term sustainability.

Bahir Dar University is a partner of the UEA UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation, sharing an understanding of literacy as a social practice, and this ideological stance has shaped this project too. The UNESCO Chair was established in 2016 at the University of East Anglia, UK, as a collaboration with six universities in Malawi, Nepal, the Philippines, Ethiopia and Egypt. The aim is to develop understanding about how adult learning – particularly for women and young adults - can help address inequalities in the poorest communities of the world. Through investigating how or why adult literacy might facilitate or respond to processes of social transformation, including women's empowerment, the UEA UNESCO Chair programme works to strengthen the interaction between formal, non-formal and informal learning in research, policy and practice.

About the cover

Bottom left: Neighboring families attending traditional coffee ceremony in one of the family's compounds in Bahir Dar
Bottom right: Different members of a family engaged in collaborative weaving tasks in Awramba
Top: Awoke, a veteran horn craftsman and young man making cups collaboratively in Tilili, Awi Zone

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1 INTRODUCTION

Context

Several policy documents in Ethiopia have emphasized the importance of education in general and literacy in particular to bring about the desired overall development of the country. The significance of education and/or literacy for the country's development has been highlighted in successive development policy documents: Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP); the Education and Training Policy (ETP); the consecutive Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), now in its fifth version; the Agricultural Extension Program Strategy; the Health Service Extension Program Strategy; School Improvement Program; Early Childhood Care and Education; Adult Education Strategy, among others.

At the continent level, the overarching Agenda 2063[1] document also emphasizes the importance of education in the overall development and transformation of the African continent while globally, the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4 puts the emphasis on promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. One of the ways in which lifelong learning can be put into practice, according to UNESCO, is by establishing a system of learning cities/regions/communities. In its Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities (UIL, 2013), UNESCO puts "Revitalizing learning in families and communities" as one of twelve areas of focus in building learning cities. UNESCO had also published a number of resources that introduce and promote family literacy.

Although at a national level, these policy initiatives aspire to a better country and society through educational transformations, the existing policy and strategy documents only focus on interventions targeting specific age and occupation groups. In particular, there has rarely been a focus on the family as a unit of intervention, especially within literacy and education. And yet traditionally, the family has always been a unit of indigenous learning practices in Ethiopia. The development and persistence of a range of social, economic, and cultural traditions and practices can be considered as evidence for the presence of indigenous learning practices across and within generations within the family institution. In Ethiopia, civilizations and socio-cultural and economic systems have existed for several centuries before the establishment of a modern education system in the country, which is only a century old.

In its century-old development, the modern education system has enabled some segments of the country's population to read and write. However, considering the total population of the country, the formal education system only reaches a small proportion (Kassaye, 2005). Thus, the system has created a divide between those who can read and write, and those who cannot. As time has passed, those who have not had the chance to attend formal schooling and who were/are not able to read and write, have developed a tendency to consider themselves as useless, ignorant and ashamed of themselves and their situation, despite the fact that they have deep knowledge and many skills that enable them to nonetheless participate in socio-economic, cultural and political life. Previous studies have clearly evidenced the presence of such knowledge and skills in a pastoral community that is considered as "illiterate" (Robinson-Pant, 2016; Warkineh and Gizaw, 2019).

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[1] The Africa Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.
https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview

The various literacy campaigns over the past five decades have considered "illiteracy" as one of the "ills" of the society, best to be "eradicated" soon, in order to bring about "development" in the country (Werqneh, 2011). Terms related to "illiteracy" have also been militarized in the Ethiopian context, especially during the Dergue (Military) Regime (1974-1991). Words and phrases like: "enemy", "fight against…", "Literacy Army", "Campaign", etc. were introduced to the education sector. All these political and educational movements and labelling of those who have not gone through the system, have widened the psychological and socio-cultural rift between the educated and 'not-educated'. It is with this national context that this research study was initiated. It aims to look deep into the family unit to see how existing indigenous and non-indigenous learning practices, transferred and shared between different generations, could form the basis of literacy and development programs.

This study of family literacy, indigenous learning and sustainable development aims to investigate how family literacy could help to tackle the broader challenges signaled in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The study is part of a UKRI-funded project on "Family literacy, indigenous learning and sustainable development: Proof of concept pilot" which is being conducted simultaneously in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal and the Philippines, led by the University of East Anglia, UK[2]. We believe that this study will enable policy and/or decision makers to (let) design evidence-based and relevant policy/strategy and programs for family literacy and learning in Ethiopia, which has not existed hitherto.

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Research questions

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Within the broader aims of the study mentioned above, this research intends to respond to the following specific research questions:

1. What kind of indigenous (inter)generational learning and practices are families engaged in?
2. What kind of literacy learning practices are families engaged in?
3. How do family members' learning practices draw on informal, non-formal and formal learning?
4. In what contexts does indigenous (inter)generational learning take place?

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[2]This family literacy project forms one of four components within the overarching project, "Meeting the SDGs: creating innovative infrastructures and policy solutions to support sustainable development in Global South communities".

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter begins by briefly defining key concepts and terms in the paper, namely family literacy, approaches to family literacy and indigenous knowledge. It then reviews policy and strategy documents in Ethiopia that relate to family literacy and indigenous learning. This chapter also describes some instances of practices that exemplify family literacy and indigenous learning.

Defining Family Literacy

Within the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities (UIL,2011), the term family literacy is used in two ways, which need to be distinguished clearly from each other: (A) the use(s) of literacy within a family or wider community, especially activities involving two or more generations, and (B) education programs that help to develop literacy and numeracy learning in a family context. The term 'family learning' (which includes family literacy) involves broader learning activities beyond literacy in the family and community contexts. Therefore, family literacy and learning is an approach to learning that focuses on intergenerational interactions within the family and community which promote the development of literacy and related life skills (English, 2015). 'Family literacy' and 'family learning' are relatively recent approaches to promoting literacy and a culture of learning, particularly in disadvantaged, vulnerable families (Hanemann et al., 2017). As part of family literacy, family members learn together how to become literate, increase literacy and use the power of literacy and family communication to change their lives and to meet their goals (Zygouris-coe, 2007). Family literacy (as discussed in countries in the Global North) describes a wide range of activities from a parent reading a book to a child to a formal program with many services for adults and children.

Approaches to Family Literacy

Crooks (2017) identifies two perspectives of family literacy. The first perspective – a social practices view, conceptualizes literacy as a diverse set of social practices embedded in particular cultural contexts as well as critical and social change approaches to education. The second perspective is an intervention view (ibid) which has been shaped by school-based notions of literacy, intertwined with concerns about 'the literacy crisis' that links individuals' low literacy levels to unemployment and poverty of family literacy.This has been referred to as a deficit perspective of family literacy, which is a racialized discourse, at least in the context of educational practice in Canada and North America (ibid). Deficit approach family literacy programs are often based on the underlying premise that low-income families are too deficient in literacy practices, parenting skills and knowledge to support effective child learning, and hence require regulation and education to ensure that their literacy is promoted (Caspe, 2003).

In this regard, Reyes and Torres (2007) identified a growing ideological divide in the field of family literacy between programs that strive to colonize families with middle-class European-American literacy practices, and those based on Freire's philosophy which works toward affirming diverse family literacy practices. The intervention view of family literacy believes in the universalization of literacy and uses a one-size-fits-all approach. On the other hand, the social practice perspective of family literacy considers the importance of context. Advocates of the social practice perspective of family literacy have argued that traditionally non-mainstream families have been 'colonized' by measuring them against European-American middle-class family literacy practices (ibid).

As mentioned in the introduction, except for a couple of externally funded project-based interventions, there are no government-run family and intergenerational literacy and learning programs in Ethiopia. Even project-based interventions (presented below) use an intervention approach. By contrast, this project and our team advocate for basing family and intergenerational literacy and learning interventions on the indigenous practices of what is already available within the society (the social practice approach).

Indigenous Knowledge

Several words and phrases are used to refer to indigenous knowledge (IK, henceforth). In Ethiopia, as stated in Zelalem (2017), some of these are: 'folk knowledge', 'local knowledge', 'traditional knowledge', 'people's knowledge', 'traditional wisdom', and 'traditional science'. Similarly, various definitions have been given for IK. Emeaglwali (2014:1) defines IK as " the collective body of strategies, practices, techniques, tools, intellectual resources, explanations, beliefs, and value sac cumulated over time in a particular locality, without the interference and loads of external hegemonic forces". Zelalem (2017) notes that IK is what indigenous people know and do and have practiced for generations, developed through experience, innovation, and trial and error. Boven & Morohashi (2002) cited in Yigzaw and Boudreau (2010), posit that IK is developed outside the formal educational system, is embedded in culture and is unique to a given society. Besides, according to Kebede and Belay (2017), IK is rooted in the practices, institutions, relationships, interactions, and rituals of a community and is the overall knowledge and skills that people in a particular context own and that enable them to get the most out of their environment. Kebede and Belay (2017) list the key IK practice areas as agriculture, animal husbandry, child rearing practices, education systems, medicine and natural resource management. In this context, indigenous knowledge is understood as traditional beliefs, explanations and practices that are rooted in the experiences of the local culture and have been practiced over several generations.

Exploring Family Literacy and Learning in Ethiopian Policy

As mentioned in the introduction, family literacy has not been promoted in the formal education system of Ethiopia. However, some policy documents have elements that resemble elements of a family literacy program. In this section, we review policy not only within the education sector but also in other sectors such as agriculture and health, to see how family literacy and learning elements are discussed. We begin with the educational policy literature.

School Improvement Program (SIP)

The School Improvement Program (SIP) is one of six programs[3] that fall under the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP). Its aim is to enhance quality of Ethiopian general education with active involvement of all stakeholders i.e. students, teachers, parents, the community, and education sector staff members, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of education activities in each respective schools (FDRE Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010).

The SIP, in its updated implementation guideline, states that meaningful parental participation is a must in improving the quality of general education (MoE, 2011b). The guideline (MoE, 2011b) states that the presence of active parent school communication, parental support for students to learn in their home, the voluntary participation of parents in school events and activities, the active participation of parents in decisions related to students learning, school-community cooperation and asset mapping, are major indicators of meaningful parental participation in the SIP. Parents' participation in the school community is intended to enhance their learning opportunities through actively participating in their children's learning.

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[3] Curriculum; Textbooks and Assessment; Teacher Development Program; School Improvement Program; Management and Administration Program; Program Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation

There is also reference to a form of family literacy and intergenerational teaching in the guideline: standard 6.4 states that "Number of students (by girls and boys) volunteering to teach/mentor adults in adult literacy classes organized by the school or with community organizations " is a standard to measure the extent of student empowerment (MoE, 2010). In relation to this standard, students enrolled in general education are expected to facilitate literacy classes in which their parents are enrolled. Hence, a form of family literacy is in place in the sense that children are required to be facilitators of literacy learning in the community. Similarly, under standard 15.6, students and formal education teachers are expected to teach literacy classes to the surrounding community to promote education. In the process of promoting the importance of formal education, teachers and even students, are expected to engage in facilitating literacy class for adults. With regards to improving the schools themselves, guidelines state that school children should work together with their parents and assume leadership responsibility, with the aim of enhancing leadership skills (i.e. moral literacy) with the help of parents. It can be seen that SIP sets out to facilitate two-way intergenerational learning interactions between parents and their children.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy Framework

The ECCE policy framework was proposed to build service delivery on four pillars: (1) Parental education, (2) Health and Early Stimulation Program (Prenatal to 3+ years) (3) Preschools: community-based kindergartens (4 to 6+ years) (4) Community-based Non-formal school readiness (MoE, 2010). All these pillars have a family literacy and learning aspect. The parental education pillar involves parents directly in the learning process while helping children indirectly. Community-based kindergartens similarly require the active involvement of parents in the learning progress of their children and active participation of children in play learning within their family and the community environment. Here, children are encouraged to learn from adults in their family or their community and in the process, adults may also acquire important knowledge and skills for their lives. This initiative too entails the core concept of family and intergenerational learning.

The framework has the following five objectives: (1) To establish a coherent governance structure for ECCE and ensure the mainstreaming of ECCE in all relevant national policies and programs; (2) To promote and support the development of accessible, equitable and quality ECCE services for all children, particularly for vulnerable children with special needs and marginalized children; (3) To protect young children from any form of abuse and harmful practices; (4) To promote and strengthen partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders required for the effective delivery of services and programs for young children; (5) To mobilize, plan and allocate the necessary resources to ensure quality services for all children from prenatal to seven years of age.

To improve the alarmingly low rates of access to ECCE programs in the country in general and in rural areas in particular, the Ethiopian Government instituted a new modality of delivery known as "Zero Class" or "O Class" in 2010 (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). Among the "O" Class child-to-child program. Child-to-Child Approach for School Readiness Program (CtCSRP) aims to improve children's school readiness through a child-centered, peer tutoring approach that engages older children (Young Facilitators) to conduct early learning activities with pre-school aged children in their home villages (Mundy et al., 2014). Children learning from adults, which involves the transfer of knowledge and skills across generations, is not the only aspect of intergenerational learning: within generation transfer is also given due attention. The case of CtCSRP, children tutoring pre-schooled children, is an example of knowledge and skills transfer among children of the same generation.

Recognizing that most parents, like teachers, are only partially available to guide and supervise children's development and learning (Nsamenang, 2011), the CtCSRP as a child to child program, means that learning opportunities are more available. It deserves special attention in the design of ECDCE programs in Africa, by integrating it into the curricula of the hands-on responsibility training component of African family-based education (cited in Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). However, the teacher-centered attitude of parents has been said to challenge the effectiveness of the child-to-child learning program. Even though child facilitators receive some training and act as volunteers, parental attitudes may undermine the role of small children teaching other small children (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015).

Nonetheless, young children who participated in the CtCSRP had significantly higher scores in all early numeracy and literacy tasks tested, compared to children in the control group (Mundy et al., 2014).

Moreover, the CtCSRP appears to have an impact on children's success in school in both the short and medium-term, including on-time enrolment, academic achievement and reduced dropout rates. Young facilitators felt happier at school, were more confident, and had more positive attitudes towards learning as a result of participating in the CtCSRP (Mundy et al., 2014). Besides this, the new education development road map of Ethiopia advises shared responsibility of the community in the different school activities, such as in the learning-teaching process, discipline and the overall ecosystem of the primary school (MoE, 2018).

The responsibility to achieve the proposed objectives of ECCE in Ethiopia depends on the cooperation between education, health and women affairs staff at all levels (MoE, 2010). Like SIP, the ECCE policy initiative recognizes the importance of promoting parents' engagement in young children's education.

National Adult Education Strategic Document and Integrated Functional Adult Literacy (IFAL) Framework

MoE (2008) has developed a national adult education strategy that aims to enhance the literacy and numeracy skills of the adult population in the country. Although the strategic document does not include family literacy as an approach to literacy and learning, the curriculum framework (MOE, 2011a) states that the Integrated Functional Adult Literacy (IFAL)/Integrated Functional Adult Education(IFAE) program participants can use readily accessible materials in their home and in the community, in the process of acquiring literacy skills. The content of learning for IFAE (the then IFAL) program is expected to incorporate family issues, and family literacy is included indirectly (MOE, 2011a). The document also states that program participants (i.e. adults, parents) will apply what they have learned in the IFAE program in the family and that members of the family will therefore benefit indirectly from the program. However, the national adult education policy and a newly developed Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-2030) do not incorporate family literacy as a strategy for providing literacy and

learning to children and adults in the country. Rather, family literacy and learning are considered as an outcome of the program.

From this analysis of relevant educational policy, it appears that there has been greater emphasis on intergenerational learning (particularly between parents and children) in the school-focused documents than in adult literacy policy and programs. Moving outside the education sector, we look now at agriculture and health.

Agricultural Extension Program

The Ethiopian agricultural extension program has the objective of contributing significantly to the attainment of food and nutrition security, poverty reduction and wealth creation in the country, through the adoption and adaptation of improved technologies by delivering market-oriented, demand-driven and pluralistic extension services (Ministry of Agriculture [MoA], 2017). The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency [ATA] (2014) stresses the importance of collective action for agricultural extension service delivery and productivity. In the process of working together to address a common problem in the community or within the family, the policy document indicates that literacy and learning will be practised (ATA, 2014).

The pillars of the program include: (1) Strengthening FTCs through active participation of community and capacity building; (2) Enhancing agricultural knowledge and information systems; (3) Enhancing client oriented and multi actor's advisory extension services; (4) Facilitating market linkage and enhance value chains development; (5) Gender, youth and nutrition mainstreaming; (6) Enhancing environmental management and sustainability; (7) Enhancing institutional arrangements, coordination and linkages among key agricultural development partners; (8) Human resource development and utilization for effective extension service delivery; (9) Establishing strong and dynamic result-based monitoring, evaluation and learning (RB-MLE) for continuous improvement of extension services delivery (MoA, 2017). It can be inferred that the first four pillars incorporate family literacy as a means to achieve the objectives, while the process of achieving the targeted pillars in turn, are intended to facilitate family literacy and lifelong learning.

The document has a principle of "Inclusive extension services" whereby extension is considered more impactful when it considers "the whole family and community approach" instead of focusing only on model farmers and household heads (Ministry of Agriculture, 2017, p. 8).

To achieve the desired objectives, extension services are provided for farmers up to the kebele (local) level Farmer Training Centers (FTC). Among others, FTCs have been established to perform tasks such as conducting certificate and non-certificate farmer training. The FTC expects a person to have literacy and numeracy skills to be eligible to participate in the courses. However, the vast majority of farmers who need the skills training courses don't have the requisite literacy skills to participate (MOE, 2008).

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency has created a learning platform for farmers in the country. The Farmers Learning Platform (FLP) is intended to stimulate farmer learning; encourage farmers to diagnose their problems; solicit local level solutions using their indigenous knowledge; and use new technologies from research institutes and universities. Such platforms use family literacy as an approach to learning. All family members working in farming, learn together with the presence of an agricultural extension worker as a facilitator. Even formal school students who work on the farm part-time to support their families, are expected to take part in the learning platform to learn indigenous knowledge from their parents and to share what they learn from formal schooling with their parents and other families in the community (ATA, 2014).

The strategy identifies school clubs as an important channel for reaching the community to influence behavioral and attitudinal changes (ATA, 2014). Club members can also be used to instigate discussion among themselves, the school community and their families. While school club members engage in discussions with their families about agricultural extension and productivity, they are also practising their communicative skills and other skills within their family. The clubs can be supported through information sharing using different methods such as leaflets, experience sharing and visits to relevant organizations, inviting experts and prominent professionals to schools to speak about agriculture and nutrition (ATA, 2014).

While club members read the leaflets to their families, they can enhance the literacy skills of their family in the process of understanding these leaflets.

This analysis of Ethiopia's agricultural extension policy reveals a stronger emphasis on intergenerational learning than the educational policy reviewed earlier. In particular, the FLP brings together 'embedded' on-the-job literacy and skills learning, providing opportunities for older generations to share indigenous farming skills and knowledge with the younger generation.

The Health Extension Program

Moving to the health sector, we found connections with family literacy in the health extension program documentation developed by the FDRE Ministry of Health. The main objective of the Health Service Extension Program is to improve equitable access to preventive essential health interventions, through community /kebele/ based health services, with a strong focus on sustained preventative health actions and increased health awareness (FDRE Minisry of Health [MoH], 2005). To achieve this objective, the health extension service is being provided as a package, focusing on preventive health measures that target households, particularly women/mothers, at the kebele level and sixteen essential health service packages grouped in to four pillars were planned and have now been implemented (MoH, 2005).

The first pillar is Disease Prevention and Control and includes four packages (HIV and other STIs prevention and control; TB prevention and control; malaria prevention and control; and first aid emergency measures). Family Health Service is the second pillar of the health extension program and includes five packages (maternal and child health; family planning; immunization; adolescent reproductive health; and nutrition). The third pillar, Hygiene and Environmental Sanitation, consists of seven packages (excreta disposal; solid and liquid waste disposal; water supply safety measures; food hygiene and safety measures; healthy home environment; control of insects and rodents; and personal hygiene). Health Education and Communication is the fourth pillar with the objective of increasing community awareness in health through the involvement of communities and the provision of continued health education, to bring about what are

termed positive changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. All these topics emphasize Western medicine and preventative measures, with no recognition of indigenous health beliefs and practices and change is perceived as challenging traditional beliefs.

Health education is a major component of health extension programs in Ethiopia which is expected to be delivered by health extension workers door to door and in the community centres (Wang et al., 2016). The early phase of model family training only included households where members were already participating in the agricultural extension programs, traditional birth attendants, volunteer community health workers or health focalizing persons in the kebele, because it was believed that they would be ready for change and could also influence the behavior and practice of community members (Wang et al., 2016). In this approach to health extension programs, influential community members are expected to take the lead in health education training. Then the early trainees will facilitate learning among their families, based on the training they undertake. Finally, changes introduced into their family way of life will attract other community members to apply the health extension package in their families. Family literacy occurs incidentally as part of discussing the health extension packages in their home.

As a result of HEP, more than 12 million households have graduated as 'model' families (Wang et al., 2016). Wang et al. (2016) define model families as:

> Households that are (1) trained in maternal health, malaria prevention, and control, and hygiene and environmental sanitation packages; (2) able to implement these packages after the training, and (3) able to influence their relatives and neighbors to adopt the same practices (p.27).

The household training provided to model family leaders facilitates family health literacy learning in their homes. Family members and other neighbours acquire health literacy skills as a result of the HEP. As stated in the above definition of the model family, the health extension program provides literacy training for families, including health literacy, environmental literacy and family life skills literacy.

From this analysis of health policy and programs in Ethiopia, it is clear that families are positioned as key sites for learning about new health practices, beliefs and behaviour. However, little account appears to be taken of indigenous health practices as the dominant assumption is that these are harmful. To conclude, although the issue of family literacy has not been addressed directly in Ethiopian policy documents, traces and elements of family literacy and family learning are found, not only in the education sector but in agriculture and health sector policies as well. These policy documents tend to be top-down and do not take into consideration indigenous knowledge and skills nor indigenous ways of knowing.

Family literacy and indigenous learning practices in Ethiopia

Though institutionalized family literacy programs have no long history in Ethiopia, literacy learning within families and communities in Ethiopia has been practised since at least the period of the Ge'ez Alphabet in the 5th century AD. The early years of education in Ethiopia has a long historical presence, with roots in the major religious movements. The introduction of Christianity in the 4th century (Bowen and Horn, 1976) brought with it church education that taught early reading and writing to young children (Pankhurst, 1955). Alongside this, the Islamic movement in the western and northern African regions, introduced Islam to Ethiopia as early as the 7th century and Quran education, that taught early Arabic reading and writing to Muslim children, spread widely (Alidou et al., 2006). As with church education, Quran education has religious purposes. Lastly at the turn of the twentieth century, the evangelical movement brought protestant Christianity and introduced formal childhood education (opening of primary schools, teaching children through their mother tongue), healthcare (opening hospitals for child and maternal care), and literature (publication of primary reading materials) to the southern and western parts of Ethiopia (cited in Zewdie & Tefera, 2015).

This section focuses on family literacy practices in the Christian and Islamic traditions and describes a number of pilot projects by non-governmental and multi-national organizations on family literacy in different parts of Ethiopia.

Traditional Orthodox Christian Church and Quran Education

For centuries, the Orthodox Christian church (which is taught through the medium of Ge'ez) and Quranic education (which is taught through the medium of Arabic) have been centres for literacy and learning in Ethiopia, as described in the previous section. Even after the introduction of western education, as provision did not immediately include kindergarten education (pre-primary education), parents continued to send their pre-school children to religious providers so as to learn literacy before they entered formal schooling. However, with the expanding implementation of the ECCE policy in the country and with the introduction of mother tongue education, such practices have started to decline, especially in non-Amharic speaking areas.

Traditional faith-based education tends to be viewed by some people as linguistically irrelevant, limited only to basic literacy, unsystematic, religious focused, gender-biased, less beneficial, and hence requiring modification of objectives, programs, approaches, and management (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). Yet both Christian and Quranic education continue to function, providing a child-to-child approach with differentiated instructions whereby senior students support their juniors (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). Besides, church educators also teach within the home, which is seen as preferable than for the children to have to travel far from home. Contrary to common perception, these teaching and learning activities are highly organized, systematic, integrated, inclusive, cost-effective and reflective of many of the principles of modern pedagogy (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). The peer learning approach built into the system is also believed to nurture cooperation rather than competition. In the process of the mentor-mentee relationship, both of them also learn to respect one another (Zewdie & Tefera, 2015). Primarily, the graduates of this religious are meant to provide service in their respective religious institutions.

Aside from faith-based education, there are a few examples of pilot family literacy programs implemented in Ethiopia on a small scale.

The E-Books Family Literacy Program (eBFLP)

This program, implemented by the Canadian Organization for Development (CODE-Ethiopia), established 97 community libraries in rural Ethiopia with the aim of promoting reading, as well as critical and creative thinking, among families, through activities that can support whole-family literacy as well as literacy development at pre-school age (UIL, 2015). In this family literacy approach, children and their parents engaged in learning activities that encouraged them to interact and to learn from each other. Only applicants meeting specific requirements were eligible for the program, namely parents with basic literacy skills in one local language and at least one child aged between three and six years old. Parents had to commit to attending each of the eleven sessions. Participants were selected from eligible families by lottery.

The family literacy approach embraced by eBFLP succeeded in involving adults and children together in the activities of the community library (UIL,2015). Reading and writing together was not only seen as a means to enhance language and literacy skills, but also builds community among those who share a common story and space. Connected to this program, the Electronic Information for Libraries [EIFL] (n.d.) indicates that, the e-book and Family Literacy pilot project was designed to (1) improve children's early literacy skills in three pilot communities (Fiche, Durbete, and Dire Dawa); (2) increase the availability of reading materials for pre-school children by creating new story and picture books in print and electronic formats; (3) and support 25 community libraries to use the new books in family literacy sessions, increasing early literacy learning opportunities for pre-school children (UIL, 2015).

Family and Inter-generational Literacy and Learning (FILL) Pilot Project

This collaborative pilot project by UNESCO Addis Ababa, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, and the Ministry of Education is also worth mentioning. In Ethiopia, the FILL project was implemented in three Community Learning Centres (CLCs) - Ambo Zuria Woreda, Debrebirhan Town, and Abelatula Woreda - aiming to provide inclusive, equitable and relevant literacy education for adults and children from disadvantaged families and communities, with the financial support of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning (Abera, 2019). The project comprises two groups of learners: adults who are participants of the Integrated Functional Adult Literacy program and their children who are attending the "O" class pre-primary education program in public schools.

FILL project had two major family literacy activities for both adult and child participants. The first activity occurs in class and the second is home-based (Abera, 2019). In home-based activities, parents take the lead in teaching their children; they work with them by helping the child to understand the environment and to work on the homework given by the facilitators of "O" class education. They also ask the child to share what they have learnt in the learning centre with other members of the family who can then give feedback and even ask questions for clarity.

In class activities, three sessions per week, there are two modalities (i.e. learning together and learning separately) (Abera, 2019). In learning together sessions, which are once a week, both children and adults sit together and learn about the same topics and then reflect on what they did in home-based activities and the lessons they learnt from those activities. In these sessions, they get the chance to raise questions about the home-based activities with the whole class and in the presence of the facilitators. In the separate/parallel sessions, which are twice a week, children and adults learn separately with different topics and different facilitators.

The pilot project evaluation team (Abera, 2019) found that: (1) both children and adults performed better in their local language in the joint sessions; (2) participants obtained a double benefit from the project by getting demand-driven learning opportunities and the opportunity to follow up their child easily by learning together with them; (3) children became capable of reading in their first language and their socialization increased, besides showing considerable progress in writing.

However, the pilot project also faced a number of challenges, including lack of appropriate training and follow up for facilitators, lack of skilled facilitators, shortage of supplementary reading materials, lack of time on the side of adult participants as a result of a multiplicity of responsibilities, lack of playgrounds for children in the learning centres, and lack of professional development leading to the upgrading of qualifications for facilitators.

To conclude, in this section we have stated that faith-based education, including project-based family literacy and learning, has a long tradition in Ethiopia. The aim of indigenous religious education programs has been to train the next generation of religious practitioners, although before the introduction of modern (western) education, graduates of these institutions also went on to become civil servants. Before the introduction of modern (western-style) schools, this long-standing educational provision was largely responsible for the acquisition and sustenance of literacy skills. In the presence of a religious teacher in the family, children and relatives benefitted from learning within the family, without needing to travel to another place. We also described some project-based interventions as showcases of western-based models of family literacy and intergenerational learning. Although they were meant to serve as springboards for further intervention by the government and/or other organizations, family and intergenerational literacy and learning interventions have not been introduced in Ethiopia.

3 METHODOLOGY

Rsearch Design

This study aims to identify the 'what' and 'how' of indigenous and non-indigenous intergenerational learning activities in families. By doing so, this study tries to enable policy makers to design evidence-based and relevant policy/strategy and programs for family literacy and learning in the country. To accomplish these purposes, this study used an ethnographic style qualitative research methodology.

Sample and Sampling Technique

This study was intended to be undertaken in three contrasting study sites – Bahir Dar, Awramba and Karrayyu. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, the rapid expansion of the pandemic in that part of the country, and the issuance of a travel ban and a state of emergency, the study team was not able to undertake the data collection in the Karrayyu site. In its place, the team chose a third site Awi Zone, where fieldwork was conducted in April 2021. Data from Bahir Dar and Awramba sites was only collected at the beginning (March 2020). By taking the rather unique Awramba community as a comparison with Bahir Dar, the team set out to explore how taken-for-granted practices can be 'unlearned' – with the idea of providing insights into learning within transformed family structures.

Accordingly, fourteen families – three in Bahir Dar, four in Awramba and seven in Awi zone -were purposively selected for this study. In the case of Awramba, the research team held discussions with the community leaders and four sample families were selected.

In Bahir Dar, attempts were made to include samples representing different socio-economic status (better income and educational level, middle income and public servant, and lower income). In Awi zone, we included families who were engaged in different indigenous practices in the area.

Regarding the criteria for the selection of families for this study, the research team included families with at least two generations, and that had children attending at least secondary school level. Four of the fourteen families families in this study included three generations while the rest had two. In total, 32 (13 female and 19 male) people in the fourteen families were formally interviewed for this study.

Process of Data Collection

The primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and unstructured observation. Observations were undertaken in order to see the literacy practices and livelihood activities in situ and to explore any family learning. Before going into data collection directly, the research team built rapport with the sample families, which took some days, through observation in their residences and/or workplaces.

The research team consisted of three female and two male Bahir Dar UNESCO Chair team members. Female respondents were interviewed by female researchers and males by male researchers. For this study, the researchers themselves collected the data while guides were used in the field to get to the sample families with the desired attributes. Data was collected in the mother-tongue (Amharic) language of the interviewees. While interviewing, notes were taken and voice was recorded with the consent of the respondents. The study team secured ethical clearance for this study from the concerned office at Bahir Dar University. Consent forms were signed by the interviewed family members.

Data analysis

The research team held discussions after visiting/observing each family. As there was division of labour among the researchers, the team shared information after each interview and discussion notes were taken. Follow-up questions were prepared and asked from interviewees, based on the points shared during discussions. Recorded voice data was fully transcribed by the research team members. Emerging themes and sub-themes were identified by each research team member, and then the themes were triangulated by the team and common themes were selected for further analysis.

The BDU research team during their field research (from left to right): Ermiyas Tsehay Birhanu, Tizita Lemma Melka, Turuwark Zalalam Warkineh, Abiy Menkir Gizaw and Yeraswork Megersa Bedada

Study sites

This study was carried out in three sites – Bahir Dar City, Awramba Community and Awi zone. The three sites were selected for the different values they added to the study. Bahir Dar city represents an urban community where a range of indigenous and intergenerational activities are practised and learned. Bahir Dar is the largest city in the Amhara region and is the regional capital; there is strong evidence of indigenous health, agriculture and religious learning within communities and families here. It was also selected to see how modern/scientific thinking and actions as well as digital technologies (and also in view of a place where several of the above reviewed policies are implemented well) are affecting/interacting with local and indigenous knowledge and skills, practices and learning. Awramba was chosen as a unique community which was explicitly established to challenge inequalities, particularly around gender and age hierarchies, work culture and to nurture literacy and learning practices. With its emphasis on modern technology, structured life style, deliberately built learning spaces and continuous learning, Awramba community was chosen to add to the variety of the data in the study. Awi Zone (which was the last-minute replacement for Karrayyu) has a different culture and language, and rich and unique indigenous intergenerational practices and learning.

Bahir Dar
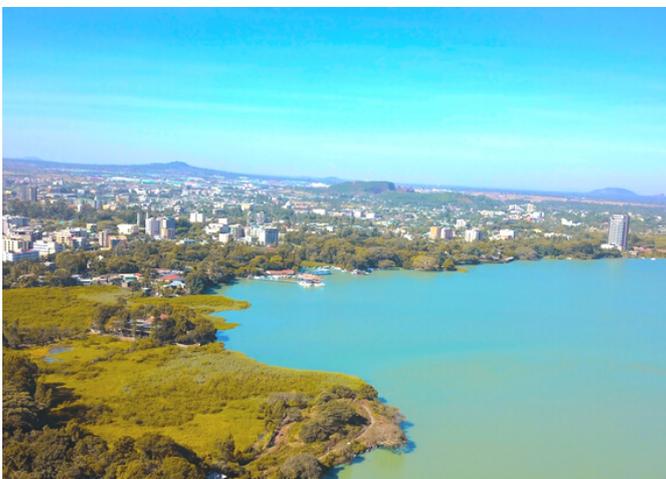
Photo of Bahir Dar City

Bahir Dar city is located in north-western Ethiopia. It is one of 14 administrative units within the Amhara National Regional State and is the capital of the region. Bahir Dar is 565 km away from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The population of the city is estimated to be around 300,000. More than 60% of the city's population is said to come from outside of the city (from the surrounding rural areas). It is established at the southern extreme shore of Lake Tana (the largest lake in Ethiopia) where the Blue Nile starts its long journey to the Mediterranean sea via Sudan and Egypt.

Historical records indicate that the city evolved from a monastery administration and a market place to a fast growing urban centre. Although its establishment goes back to the medieval period, until the 19th century, there was limited information about the type of development that was taking place in Bahir Dar. Nevertheless, its location at the mouth of the Blue Nile as well as its situation along the highway of the long-distance trade route that linked northern and south- western Ethiopia, must have given importance to Bahir Dar, allowing it to remain significant enough to be frequented by European travellers.

Since then, there have been a number of significant developments. During the 1960s and 1970s, Bahir Dar grew rapidly, being the capital of a province. In the 1990s, Bahir Dar experienced remarkable growth and further expansion and became the capital of the Amhara National State. Today, the major economic sectors of the city are horticulture, agro-industrial processing, urban agriculture, manufacturing, and diverse service industries. Bahir Dar is also one of the leading tourist destinations in Ethiopia.

Bahir Dar has a remarkable mix of cultures and languages. The main ethnic and religious groups are the Amhara and Orthodox Christians, but Bahir Dar has a vibrant mix of other cultures, too, including the Agaw, Oromo and Tigre people. Islam and Protestantism also have a large number of followers in Bahir Dar.

The Orthodox Christian church in Bahir Dar has various churches in the name of saints and different services are offered to the followers. Priests and deacons are the main servants of the church. Churches offer daily prayer services, sermons, serve as church education centres as well as healing places for their followers where healing takes place using holy water and the recital of holy scriptures.

Currently, there are about 155 educational institutions (both public and private) from KG to tertiary levels in Bahir Dar. One of these institutions is Bahir Dar University, one of the first generation public universities in Ethiopia. With eight campuses all over the city, more than 40,000 students and more than 6,000 academic and administrative staff, Bahir Dar University is the largest institution in the city.

To conclude, the majority of the city's population comes from the surrounding rural areas and follows Orthodox Christianity. The availability of a wide range of educational institutions and learning opportunities, facilitates the availability, practice and transmission of different types of religious and indigenous intergenerational learning activities. In addition, being a capital of a region, and availability of ICT infrastructure, Bahir Dar exemplifies how modern technology can transform indigenous practices.
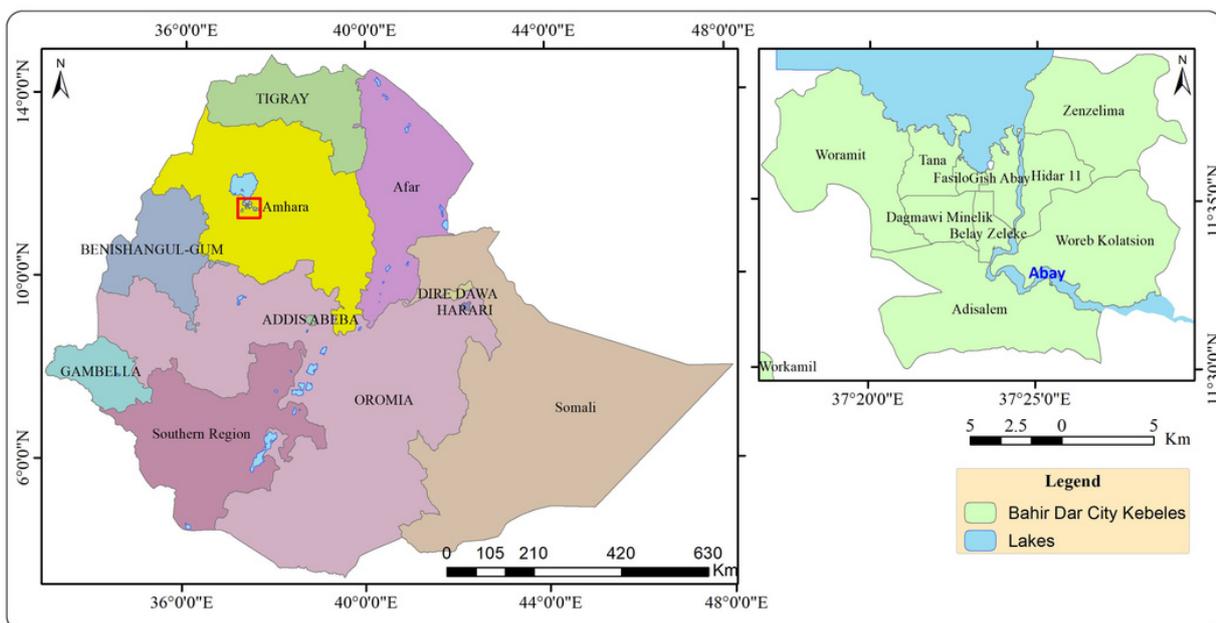
Map of Bahir Dar

Awramba is located in the Fogera District of South Gondar Administrative Zone of the Amhara National Regional State of Ethiopia. The community, which comprises 535 people, owns a total of 17.5 hectares of land. The Awramba people speak Amharic.

Established in 1980 with the expressed intention of, among others, changing harmful traditional practices, Awramba is a unique, self-made modern rural community. The uniqueness of the community also emanates from being at the centre of a rural, uneducated, agrarian, patriarchal and religious society, its acceptance of women's equality, rejection of institutionalized religious practices, rotating and ability-based division of labour, hard-work, and unlimited quest for knowledge and learning, among many other qualities.

Most of the distinguishing features of the Awramba community are unique because they are in sharp contrast to the rest of the society, including urban areas.

The Awramba community has five basic principles: equality of women; respecting children's rights; caring for those who are not able to work due to ageing and health problems; avoiding bad speech and bad deeds; accepting all human beings as brothers and sisters, regardless of their differences and living in solidarity with everyone.

In the attempt to create a utopian community, Honorable Doctor Zumra Nuru, the founder of the community, spent more than five years looking for like-minded people.[4] Zumra and his followers faced very serious challenges, including absence of food (they lived on eating cotton seed), absence of shelter (they slept rough under tree sheds for years), death threats, exile to Southern Ethiopia (1989-93) and expropriation of their farmland.

Drawing of Awramba Community Founder, Honorable Doctor Zumra Nuru by Abush Negash. Source: Awramba Museum.

[4]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Out5aigb5Ls
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=371bP9S-RZY

There are two types of membership in Awramba community – the Awramba Community new chapter for behaviour building and development multi-purpose association (community member, in short), and the Awramba Community farmers and handicrafts multi-purpose cooperative (cooperative member, in short). The difference between the two is that community members may live in or out of Awramba but are expected to put the values, principles, rules and regulations of the community into practice and disseminate them to the areas in which they live; cooperative members live together in Awramba and work communally. Both the Awramba Community and Cooperative were legally recognized by the Amhara National Regional State Justice Bureau in 2006 and Cooperatives' Promotion Agency in 2008, respectively.

In order to realize the principles and values of the Awramba community, it is led by 12 committees. Of these, the Development Committee is the central committee that coordinates and supervises the activities of the other committees. The other committees are: Lewegen Derash (Charity); guest reception; lost and found property storing; elderly, orphans, patients and maternity care; residential area allocating; problem identifying; complaint resolving; security; education; water and sanitation; and field work assigning committees.

Now, the Awramba community owns and runs a small museum, a medium sized cafeteria and pension, oil refinery factory, a small-sized textile factory with manual technologies, flour milling facilities, grocery shops, boutiques, educational service provision units (KG, Primary and Secondary Schools, library, computer centre), and a health centre. These facilities provide services not only to members of the community but also to the nearby community.

In Awramba (in contrast to the surrounding communities), every day of the week is a working day. But communal works are done from Monday to Saturday from 8 AM in the morning to 5 PM in the evening, with an hour lunch break from 1 – 2 PM. Most members of the community continue working on private activities after the end of the specified communal work from Monday to Saturday and on Sunday.

To sum up, being hard working and committed people, the Awramba community is known for having set up environments that nurture inter/generational learning and literacy. They have established a system in which everyone is initiated into learning new skills and where there is a culture of transferring skills. In addition, we thought that Awramba might provide insights into how indigenous beliefs or practices are unlearned informally.
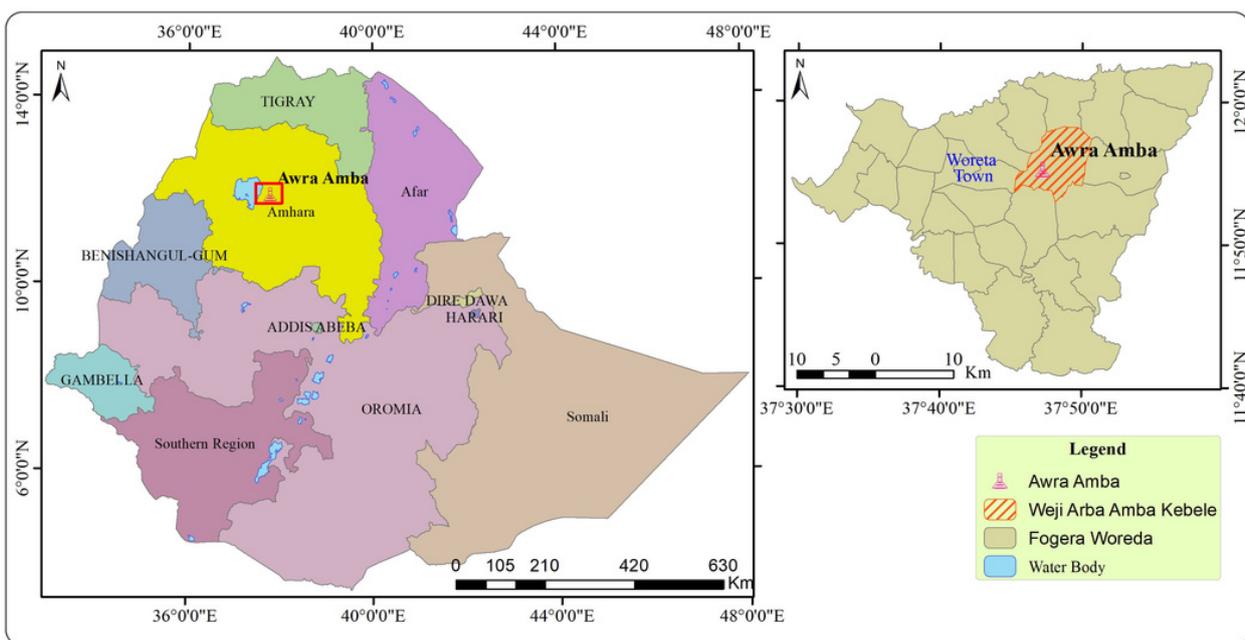
Map of Awramba

Also called Agaw/Agew, Awi Zone is an administrative zone in the Amhara National Regional State. With seven districts, it has an estimated size of 9,148.43 square km, and a total population of 1,077,144. The Zone's capital, Injibara town is around 120 km away from Bahir Dar. Awi Zone is bordered on the west by Benishangul-Gumuz Region, on the north by North Gondar Zone, and on the east by West Gojjam Zone. In Awi Zone, the research team travelled to collect data in three locations - Dangla, Injibara and Tilili - where indigenous and traditional knowledge is widely practised.

The Awi people speak Awngi language (part of the Cushitic subfamily within Afro-asiatic); most of them also speak Amharic. 94.4% of the Awi Zone population practise Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 4.5% of the population are followers of Islam.

Topographically, with an average altitude of about 2,300 m above sea level, Awi Zone is relatively flat and fertile. It is crossed by nine permanent rivers which drain into the Abay (Blue Nile). Agriculture is the main livelihood source of the people in Awi Zone. Bamboo and other types of trees grow widely here. The Awi people have a passion for and special attachment to horses.

For example, while farming is undertaken with ox-drawn plough in other parts of the Amhara region, in Awi Zone, it is horse-drawn.

An Awi horseman showing off his skill in this year's event

The Awi people's psychic, historical, social, cultural lives and livelihoods are all closely tied to horses. For instance, the "Awi Horsemen's Association" has held an annual horse event and competition for the past 80 years.

The Awi people engage in various indigenous knowledge and skills that are practised as their main means of livelihood. For instance, with the high regard they have of horses, they make fly whisks from horses' tails. They see this type of work as intimately connected to the society's culture and identity and they believe that they have the obligation to teach this kind of skill to their children. This obligation also goes for other kinds of indigenous knowledge and skills and crafts.
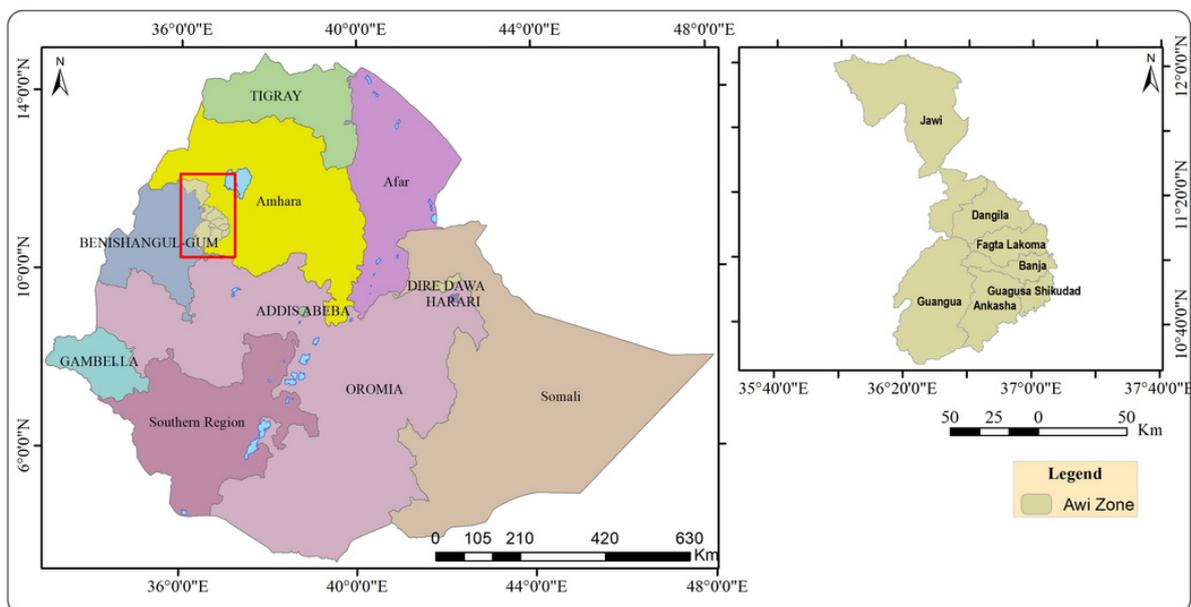
Map of Awi Zone

4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study set out to identify the different indigenous (inter)generational learning and practices in which families are engaged. Based on our data collection from the sample families in the three sites, we came up with three broad topics to be analyzed: spaces for indigenous/intergenerational learning; indigenous intergenerational learning; and digital literacy and learning. Discussion of these topics with the lenses of indigenous and intergenerational learning and the practice of literacy follows in this chapter. Where appropriate, the gendered dimensions of learning are discussed.

Spaces for Intergenerational Learning

From the in-depth interviews and unstructured observations undertaken in this study, the research team identified that there are unique learning spaces in which (inter)generational learning activities take place. Seven distinct learning spaces, ranging from an indigenous coffee ceremony in Bahir Dar to a market place in Awi Zone and new spaces in Awramba community such as the community library, are discussed below.

Coffee ceremony: An event where different generations meet to learn and exchange information

The coffee ceremony is a common and unique cultural practice which involves people gathering to talk and chat with family and neighbors over a ceremony of coffee drinking, lasting at least an hour, sometimes more. Generations have engaged in this practice but due to growing individualistic lifestyles, it is declining in urban areas.

Mr. Gebre-Sillassie's family is a big family living in Bahir Dar with 10 children and 8 grandchildren. Mr. Gebre-Sillassie works as a security guard and his wife Mrs Zuriash is a house wife. Currently, 4 of the 10 children live with their parents. This family socializes a lot with other families in the neighborhood. They have a rotating coffee ceremony daily with four other neighboring families. The ceremony usually starts around 4:30 in the afternoon every day and people of different ages gather to take part.

At this ceremony, the neighbors share information about their daily lives and about current national and global issues. As the ceremony takes more than an hour, the neighbors have the chance to move from one topic to another and raise several issues. The end of a discussion on one and onset of another point can just be marked by a crying child, a sneeze or announcement of a Facebook post by an attendee.

Neighboring families attending coffee ceremony at Gebre-Sillassie's house in Bahir Dar

The younger members of the family have smart phones with internet access, which has provided the groups with a wider perspective for discussions. For example, we attended one of the coffee ceremony events at Mr. Gebre-Sillassie's house, where among many other topics, there was a discussion about the corona virus, how quickly it was spreading and how many people were infected, how to prevent it and what to do to be protected. There was talk about consuming different mixed herbs to protect against catching the virus. The coffee ceremony, in Ethiopia, can be viewed as a context in which diverse inter-generational learning and informal information sharing activities are undertaken. Although declining in urban areas, the coffee ceremony is a widespread practice in Ethiopia. In some families, it is done even twice a day – in the morning/at mid-day and in the evening.

Home as an intergenerational learning space

Home is where all family members reside together and engage in a variety of activities. It is also a place where children acquire knowledge and skills that are important for their lives. In all the three field sites we visited, our participants referred opportunities they had to learn something at home from their family members. For instance, in Bahir Dar, Mrs Zuriash and Yeshi had learnt about traditional healing practices at home from their parents; all participants gave examples of learning to cook from their mothers or female relatives in the home. In Awramba, parents involve their children in their weaving practice at home so that they learn how to weave. It is a common practice for families to have a weaving corner or workshop in their homes or living compounds in Awramba. Similarly in Awi Zone, Chekole and his brothers learned bamboo crafts in the workshop their father set up within their compound, where they had the opportunity to watch their father working while growing up. Such craftsmen like Chekole and brothers (bamboo craftsmen), Dinku, Awoke (horn craftsmen) and others, learned their skills which are now their means of livelihood, at home from their parents.

Family meeting in Awramba: An informal space for learning and practising life skills

The Awramba community has five basic principles (listed in the site description under chapter three). The community has 12 committees to realize its principles. Within the families in the community, transferring community principles to the children is an important practice and is implemented through regular, informal multi-generational meetings. Every two weeks, two or three families come together to discuss different issues. These meetings are used to transfer not only the valued principles of the community but also to help the children to participate in different activities that will enable them to learn certain life skills. Mrs. Sumeya, 40 and a mother of five, explained this as follows:

> We do the meeting every 15 days and our family holds this meeting always on a Friday evening. […] The main goal of the family meeting is to assure the children's rights are realized, if there is something they don't approve of about their parents' behaviour, we will talk about it, or if they have some behaviour they need to change, or try to obtain a new skill and the like, we gather and discuss. […]

Zemedkun, 49, who has five children and one grandson, added that the family meeting also provides children with experience of public speaking, in addition to its main purpose. Every member of the family will have a chance to chair the family meeting. This is intended to help children to express their ideas without fear at school, which will also help them to be successful at school.

The parents as well as the children we met, told us that all the children in Awramba are expected to divide their day into three, i.e. time for study, play and work. With this in their mind, they plan what they should study, play and work for the coming days. These plans are one of the issues that will be discussed and approved (or not) in the meetings. Sometimes, they write down their plans. While describing the experience, Zemedkun recalls an occasion when he was found guilty of raising his voice with his children because he was emotional at that time. He was told that he should never do that and that he has to speak to the children calmly and rationally. He said he accepted the criticism and promised that it wouldn't happen again.

The children learn the valued principles of the community as they participate in these meetings. In addition to that, as a result of these meetings, children are reportedly engaged in planning their daily activities, setting goals for themselves, are given a chance to chair the meetings and hence develop the skill of leading meetings. They are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own as well as others' performances, which in turn promotes their performance appraisal skills, reflection skills, public speaking skills as well as confidence.

This type of family meeting is certainly unique in the Ethiopian context, a newly structured approach to inter-generational learning and practice related to cultural values and life skills.

Church as intergenerational learning space

As discussed previously, religious sites have been learning spaces for centuries in Ethiopia. In traditional church education, young men leave their home to find the best church educator there is according to what they want to learn. In most cases, the educators are also church service providers so they reside in the grounds of the church or monasteries. Young men who are seeking to learn from them will set up their own little huts around the church and stay there until they have the relevant knowledge phase and then continue their search to the next phase they want to attend.

Literacy (mostly reading) is practiced at all levels of traditional church education. For instance, the entry point of the traditional church education is learning to read the alphabet and scripts from religious texts. All levels of traditional church education involve reading practices. However, except for learning calligraphy, there is no instruction on how to write in the traditional church education system. Within church education (even now), people are only taught to read, as writing had been associated with magic. In the past, only those people who had completed higher levels of church education were taught to write. The exception is those who learn calligraphy in the few locations where it was provided.

Workplace as intergenerational learning space

Several participants identified the workplace is an important learning space. Cooking skills (Yeshi, a 40 - year- old caterer and a mother of 4 from Bahir Dar and Tarfie, 26 year old, Yeshi's niece) and driving and GPS skills (Abayneh, 30-year-old son of Mr G/Sillassie, married and with two sons) were just some of the skills that our Awramba respondents associated with their workplaces. Tekebay (34 and a mother of four) works as a receptionist in the tourist and guest reception centre in Awramba. She said that she had developed confidence and public speaking skills through being a receptionist. She recalls how she used to be:

> In the past, I used to be shy and extremely afraid of speaking to others especially strangers. It was the biggest challenge I faced at the beginning. Even when I was working in the weaving department, I used to be scared of speaking to other people. My heart started to pound very fast whenever I thought of talking to others. When I started working as a receptionist, I knew providing answers to people's questions is the requirement of the job, so I started to prepare and rehearse. Then I thought it is not so scary. I developed that step by step while working.

Hut houses built by church students around a church where church education is taking place

In addition to this, in Awramba it is customary to move from one job to another (job rotation). People will be assigned to different roles requiring different skills. We found such experiences in all the families we interviewed. As an example, Godana (52-year-old father of four) started working in the cooperative as a weaver, using a traditional machine, then upgraded to working on a modern machine, then to working as an operator in a grinding mill facility and at the time of interview was working as a driver. Similarly, Mrs. Sirash (45-year-old wife of Zemedkun) started working in embroidery, then moved to weaving and was working in the food preparation unit when we met her. This is intentional task rotation as practiced in the community. The members are always ready to learn new skills when they are transferred to a new role. We believe such practices facilitated the Awramba community members' skills in terms of learning to learn, as well as building their confidence.

The market place as a learning space

Another intergenerational learning space we came across in Awi zone was the market place where we met people engaged in different tasks. In particular, we found that fly whisk making and bamboo crafting were spaces for learning.

Traditional fly whisk makers are known to prefer to work and set up their marketplace on the sides of the main street in the town. One obvious reason is to attract customers and increase their sales, as well as to be easily available to their suppliers who are farmers who sell horse hair.

Beyond that, such marketplaces allow them to advertise their work not only to the customers but also potential candidates who may be interested to get into their line of business. We were told that many people became interested in learning the skill as a result of seeing the whisk makers at work. Demissie (50-year-old fly whisk maker in Awi zone) had become interested to learn how to make fly whisks and actually learnt by going to these places. He said he was young when he learned how to make fly whisks and has been doing it for the last 29 years. He told us that there was no one in his village/kebele with the skill who could teach him. He explained:

> As soon as I moved here, I saw people sitting here on this very place and working. I got interested, so I came here and started to sit with them to watch. I thought it was easy, but later I found out it was not as I imagined. First, they showed me how to make the base /gulelat/ after that I practiced how the horse hair is attached to the base and handle. Over time, I became perfect.

Similarly, Metasebiya's neighbour, a young man in his early twenties from Awi zone, became interested in and learned bamboo crafting. He said he used to pass by his market/working place on his journey to and from school. He said he became interested when he saw Metasebiya (a bamboo craftsman in Awi zone) working so would stop from time to time to watch him working. This became a regular thing and then later, he asked Metasebiya to teach him the skills. Now he has a market place next to Metasebiya and is working on his own. These two examples illustrate market places also provide a space for people of different ages and those who are interested to learn and/or transfer skills.

Built learning spaces in Awramba: new learning spaces for all

Awramba Community is an intentional modern rural community that promotes equality, hard work and learning. The members of the community (around 450) work together, save together, utilize together and learn together.

Everything is communal as is learning: the Awramba community has a very high value for education and learning. In this sense, we see it as a family and therefore see it as relevant to family literacies.

Since its establishment, the community has engaged in informal literacy learning and it is reported that everybody in the community is now literate (except those who are very old or those who have joined the community recently). The founder and 'father' of the Awramba community, Honorable Doctor Zumra Nuru, did not have the chance to go to school.

However, along with other founding members of the community, he learnt to read and write through literacy classes organized by themselves, under the shade of a tree, but using a small blackboard that was hung from one of the branches. They were later certified has having acquired literacy skills, at the discretion of the district education bureau.

Although the community constructed its own schools, organizational responsibility was handed to the government. The community has its own library and ICT centre, which is unusual. The library has different categories of books: fiction, reference books, textbooks, children's books, etc. Every member of the community can borrow books, take them home and read. There is a notebook to list those who borrow books from the library. When they return the book, their name will be cancelled. It is administered by the education committee and the work is carried out by community members who are assigned to that place, in accordance with the work rotation practice.

The Awramba Community Library

Awramba also has ICT facilities so that members can access computers and the internet. In the village there are computer rooms and an internet café with WiFi. These, along with the value the community places on learning new skills, can be considered as enabling factors that facilitate learning The ICT centre is well used by formal school students and teachers in the community, to broaden their knowledge on different topics. Although the large majority of the library users are also said to be students, other members of the community are also reported to have used the library. Members who are not currently in school usually borrow literature (fiction) books.

This community library and ICT centre provides ample opportunity to practice reading for people of all ages and gender. Members and non-members, students attending school, adults who only completed basic literacy education in their neighbourhood and never got the chance to go to formal school and those who are educated, have equal access to the facility in their free time (after school/work and weekends). These could be considered as model literacy learning spaces for all.

Notebooks to register the list of people who borrow books from the library
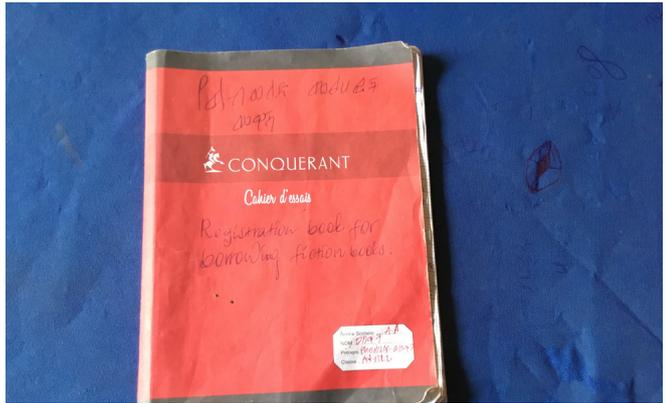
Notebooks to register the list of people who borrow books from the library

The Awramba community ICT centre

To conclude, these seven types of learning spaces reveal different approaches to intergenerational learning and literacy. In Bahir Dar, the coffee ceremony is an unstructured and informal space where incidental informal learning takes place. The issues raised arise from the everyday concerns and so vary. Although there are regular attendees, additional guests are welcome to join. People's interests, concerns and situational factors determine the topics of conversation. On the other hand, in Awi zone, it is the market place that is the primary space for intergenerational learning, which is intentional and informal. Anyone who wishes to learn a skill can approach more skilled individuals. The learners (young or old) initiate the learning based upon interest and the skilled craftsmen (young or old) are ready to transfer their skills.

The Awramba community has a more structured approach; the community library and ICT centre provide the most important spaces in terms of opportunities to read and expand knowledge and with the intentional and regular meetings in the home, all members of families get the opportunity to receive or give advice and information, while learning community values.

Indeed, literacy is widely used in the built learning spaces of the community. In other spaces as well, we observed regular uses and applications of literacy and numeracy. For example, in most of the craft work and market places, the use of numeracy and literacy is common. In general, in these intergenerational learning spaces, people who are family members, neighbours, friends, work colleagues or strangers with different experiences, knowledge and skills, gather to read or meet to transfer and/or learn the values of the community, life skills, health related information, new livelihood skills and other important information for their life.

Indigenous Practices and Learning

We have identified four indigenous and intergenerational learning practices in the study area: health, cooking, crafts and traditional church/religious education. We discuss each of these four practices and associated beliefs, the 'what, how, why, and from whom' parts of indigenous learning, the gender aspects of these practices and the learning, tensions, changes/discontinuities, the uses of literacy and numeracy.

Indigenous Health Practices and Intergenerational Learning

Although their contents may differ, indigenous healing practices are widespread and deep-rooted in different parts of the country. This can be explained by the absence of adequate modern medical services in the past, which has forced people to find solutions within their reach. Indigenous health practices have long been transmitted from generation to generation.

How are people inspired to sustain indigenous health practices and intergenerational learning?

We tried to understand what motivates people in the study areas to continue to transfer and learn indigenous health practices. We have identified five points related to this.

First, people continue to learn and practice indigenous health practices because they prefer these practices to the modern ones. For example, all three mothers that we interviewed in Bahir Dar stated their preference for the indigenous health practices. Yeshi said:

> I prefer to try different herbs as traditional medicine, and sometimes I go to get the Holy water and most of the time I get better… If my children get sick, first I try to cure them using my way, the way I do for myself. If they don't get better, I will take them to the hospital.

The second point identified was the absence of some services in the modern health facilities (clinics and hospitals). For example, modern health services do not even recognize the presence of a health problem called "*buda*" or evil eye, let alone treating it. *Buda*/evil-eye is a very common health problem in Ethiopia which affects both children and adults. Indigenous health practice cures **buda** through religious (exorcism using holy water, religious texts etc.) or herbs. In relation to this, Yeshi explained what she and her neighbours experienced with the health extension workers.

> ❝ …They told us to forget about old traditions.[…] When we told them about evil spirits, they don't believe in it. They argue with us saying there is no such thing as evil spirit… ❞

The other point relates to different beliefs that people hold about modern medicine, the causes of diseases or their treatment. People believe modern medicine can worsen a disease or even cause the death of a sick person. Indigenous health practices have been embedded in the socio-cultural lives of people for centuries. For this reason, it is well accepted to the extent that many people totally reject modern medicine. An interview we had with Tarfie indicates that there is a widespread belief that the only way to treat *ankelis/wotetie*[5] is indigenous medicine but treatment with modern medicine causes the death of a person with *ankelis*; strangers at a clinic told her so; her land lady told her so and her aunt, Yeshi told her so. (The full quotation is presented below in the discussion of methods of learning). Abayneh also shared his experience with a modern medical doctor at a hospital:

> ❝ …even they [the doctors] want to be sure if it is not the case of evil spirits/evil eye before they give an injection to little children. They know about the saying 'if a possessed person gets an injection, he/she would die'. If they suspect that, they wouldn't give the injection. Rather, they would advise to go to the traditional healers. ❞

There are also beliefs about diseases such as *ankelis*: people believe it is caused by spirits and *buda* is caused by an 'attack' by a person with evil eye. The modern medicine explanation of these health situations is a viral attack in the case of *ankelis* and a mental illness/depression in the case of *buda*. The treatment for these health problems in indigenous health practices includes religious processes and herbal applications. So, if people believe the cause of an illness is the one provided by indigenous medicine, they will seek indigenous solutions; and if they believe the cause of an illness provided by modern medicine, they will seek modern medicine solutions.

Yet another point is the respect for and need to maintain traditions. Some of our respondents clearly indicated this. For example, Mrs. Zuriash told us

> ❝ I am old fashioned. I value tradition. I use different herbs, I make tea out of it and drink. […] It really is difficult to forget the tradition. […] ❞

Last but not least, people continue to transfer and learn indigenous health knowledge and practices for financial reasons. Modern medicine is still costly for many people, even with government subsidy. The fact that indigenous health practices use herbs that can be grown in backyards or can be found in nearby areas free of cost, and the fact that most of the indigenous knowledge is public knowledge, makes it affordable. For all these reasons, indigenous health knowledge and practices continue to be transferred to the next generation, within and across families.

The Sources and Methods of Learning Indigenous Health Practices

In discussions with families about their indigenous health practices, we found out more information from families in Bahir Dar who stated a particular preference for indigenous healing practices. Due to the above mentioned reasons, this indigenous health knowledge is being transferred and learnt in various ways. For the families we met, practicing indigenous healing is not their source of income. It is simply one of the many areas of knowledge and skills they have acquired as

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[5]Upon asking health professionals at a local university, we learnt that Ankelis/ Wotetie is a local name for measles.

part of their life experiences, mostly from encounters with elderly people. We learned that the elders in these families have ample knowledge about many diseases, they told us all about how and from whom they learnt these skills. As an example, we selected Tarfie's experience of how she came to know about a disease locally called '*ankelis/wotetie*' for the first time.

Tarfie is a 26-year-old young lady who we met in one of the families in Bahir Dar. She used to live with her aunt (Yeshi) and family until recently moving out to live on her own to raise her 10- year- old niece. Even though she has moved out of the family home, she still is adjusting to her new living situation and maintains close contact with the family who lives nearby. During our meeting she told us how she acquired the knowledge needed to heal '*ankelis/wotetie*'. She learned about the disease itself and its treatment accidentally from strangers and later from her land-lady and aunt, when her niece got sick from it. She narrated what happened as follows:

> I took my niece to a clinic when she got sick. I didn't know what had happened to her. While waiting our turn to go into the examination room, two elderly people who were sitting there waiting their turn just like us, looked at us and asked me why I brought her(my niece) here. I was confused and I asked back saying why they said that. One of them came to her and looked under her cloth and told me that she had 'ankelis', and she said 'you don't bring a person with 'ankelis' to a hospital. It doesn't cure it. For worse, it may even kill her. She shouldn't be here out in the sun; people's shadows make it worse. You have to take her home immediately and care for her at home. That is what you should do'. And they told me the rituals, what I had to do in detail.

Two other members of families in Bahir Dar mentioned the same disease and told us they had learnt about it and its treatment mainly from their parents. Yeshi and Zuriash (both mothers in different households) said that they grew up watching their parents performing these healing rituals whenever someone in the family got sick.

Tarfie narrated how she learnt had learnt to use one type of herbal medicine for eczema from her former neighbor:

> I had it on my face. Then one day my former neighbour saw my face, took me to the road side and showed me a thorny herb. I had seen it before, but I don't remember its name. Then he picked it and when he cut the leaf some kind of yellowish juice appeared. He applied that on the eczema and it was gone after two days.

Tarfie said that she was amazed and delighted and has since placed more trust in herbal medicine, as applying other types of ointments had not worked. So she went home and told the whole family about the plant. Now everyone in her family knows about this cure for eczema. Tarfie said that she not only transferred this knowledge to other family members, but she also uses it to help others. She said,

> After a long time, I saw my little niece having the same kind of eczema on her face. I searched for that plant and did what that man did for me, and it cured her.

People like Awoke, a 68 -year -old horn craftsman in Awi Zone, may also get information related to health from their workplace and linked to the work they are doing. He told us that it is believed that drinking water from a newly made horn cup provides fast relief from a headache. He learnt this from other people who had experienced it, people who are craftsmen. Yeshi in Bahir Dar and Shumie, a 60-year-old horn craftsman, also in Awi Zone, like to experiment with traditional herbs and leaves. Yeshi said that she has experimented on herself and has come up with a few healing practices of her own. For example, she said that she has her own way of treating an upset stomach that she has shared with other family members:

> I showed how to make the mixture to all my children and all of them know how to do it. It is common in my family. Then recently my son told me that he showed and prepared this for his new bride as well.

Merigeta Sahilu and Tedla are religious leaders we met in Awi Zone. They believe that people get ill mainly when they fail to obey God's commandments. For healing, therefore, one need to fast, pray and/or drink or use holy water. Although knowledge and skills of indigenous medicine is part of the traditional church education, as Sahilu said, only a few people study it as it takes a long time and courage to reach that level of knowledge. He told us:

> Those who continue church education up to the study of literature (metsaf bet) will have the opportunity to study different medicines. Since I didn't reach that level, I do not have knowledge in that regard. However, I know how to treat a rough voice. To provide and lead a service in the church, one has to have a clear and loud voice but not everybody is naturally given that kind of voice. Therefore, I give treatments for that. I learnt this skill from my father and passed it to my sons as well. Several people visit me to get this treatment.

In some cases, the knowledge and practice is deep rooted in people's life and is considered public knowledge. This is true for the use of a herb locally called *"damakessie"/Ocimum lamiifolium Hochst/.* Zemedkun who lives in Awramba, where indigenous health practices are not so widespread, said:

> We don't know who started to use damakessie. I think it has been used for a long time over generations. I don't even remember who told me about it or how I came to know about it. The plant grows in everyones backyard here and we use it. […] I think it is a result of experience.

We also found that some indigenous knowledge and practices are gendered. Most of the traditional healers, for example, were men. Abayneh mentioned that healers who are able/expected to evict evil spirits/evil eye are all men.

Yeshi also mentioned that religious practices that are treatments related to evil spirits/ evil eye attack can only be performed by men. This is basically because religious leaders/ priests are men. So men, mostly religious leaders, read and recite portions from religious books and apply Holy water to heal patients. Women are not allowed to do this. Similarly, we also heard that there are some herbs that are only picked by men, as both Yeshi and her husband Aderaw told us.

On the other hand, some indigenous health practices are only performed by women, such as removing the uvulitis /swollen uvula/ or rituals to heal a person with ankelis/wotetie. Reflecting on her own experience, Zuriash said that all the rituals related to ankelis/wotetie are performed by women. She said that she and her friends have seen their mothers performing these rituals to heal their children and they that they have learned from observing their mothers. Rituals include preparing coffee and different kinds of meals in the home and feeding them to the patient; it is the mothers who do that and the daughters help or watch what they are doing. This may be a reason why it is practiced only by women as the men tend to work outside the home.

Several men in the families admitted that they are unable to identify even common herbs like 'haregriesa'/zehneria scabra/. Hanna, the youngest daughter of Mr G/Sillassie, noted this and explained that we shouldn't think that men cannot or do not collect herbs too:

> […] most of the time, it is women who have easy access to herbs like 'Damakessie', herb of grace, rue, 'haregriesa' and the like, as the herbs grow in their backyard. Some of the herbs are even used in preparing food. Because of that, women are seen doing it. But it doesn't mean men cannot do that, they can.

This could be also linked to our finding that all the mothers in Bahir Dar families we met preferred indigenous practices because of accessibility and familiarity.

On another note, literacy is explicitly used in religious healing practices in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As Yehsi explained, *"…When somebody gets ill or is possessed by an evil spirit, the priests/religious leaders read and recite portions from religious books in front of the patient and apply holy water to heal the patient."* Among orthodox Christians, it is believed that when a religious book is read aloud, ordinary water will be changed into holy water which then has the power to heal several illnesses, including evil spirits.

All these examples show that indigenous healing knowledge and practices are transferred from generation to generation through oracy, observational learning or trial and error and are integrated into the daily life of people in different families. Elders are the sources of such kind of knowledge in all cases here, who feel it is their duty to transfer the knowledge about traditional healing practices to others, whether they are strangers, as in the case of Tarfie learning about measles, or members of the same family. People transfer this knowledge at home in the family, in their work places, in religious places or during other social events or in informal encounters such as the health centre.

Change and Discontinuity in Indigenous Health Practices

Although indigenous health practices are widespread, their use is diminishing from generation to generation. The first reason for this is that the government has clearly prohibited certain practices. For example, most of our respondents indicated that women used to give birth at home with the help of traditional birth attendants but this is no longer the case. A respondent in Awramba, Askale, told us:

> In the past, there were traditional birth attendants. But now the practice is forbidden. The nurses came here and taught us that it is not good to practice it. I don't recall when this happened but since then it is not practiced.[…]

The second reason for the decline in the application of indigenous knowledge practices showed is the expansion of modern education. As more people get access to modern education, the application of indigenous health practices is decreasing. Mrs. Zuriash told us:

> When we were children, our parents raised us in the traditional way; they used indigenous medicine when we got sick. They didn't take us to the hospital. […] Now things are changed; all my children prefer to go to the hospital when they get sick and encourage others too. […] They prefer to take the pills they get from the doctors than our own indigenous medicines. They don't trust the indigenous medicine because they are educated, they don't accept if we give them or tell them to use something traditional.

Indigenous health practices also declined because of the expansion of modern health awareness and services. Yeshi and Hanna, for example, told us that the health professionals, the doctors at the hospitals or the health extension workers, do not approve of indigenous health practices. Both stated that they had heard them many times criticizing these practices. As some of the respondents indicated, using modern medicine has become a "fashion": Gebre-Sillassie said the following in relation to this:

> …The young in this generation prefer to have their babies with C-section even if they are able to deliver in a natural way. They see it as a fashion.

Also, we found participants mentioning change or discontinuity of indigenous healing practices as they moved from rural areas to urban areas in search of a better life, for education or work. Couples like Anegagergn and his wife Misgana (42 and 39 respectively, and parents of three sons) reflected on their experience saying that the indigenous healing practices which were common in their home town were different from what they encountered in the places they lived – in Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar. They told us that they were not able to apply the treatments they had learned back home from their parents.

People, mostly elders, motivated by many reasons, feel obligated to pass on the knowledge they acquired from their fathers or mothers to others in their family, neighbourhood or to anyone who they feel is in need. So, despite governmental prohibitions and the influence of modern education, people continue to transfer and learn traditional healing practices informally from generation to generation.

Learning to Cook and Gender Role Stereotypes

In Ethiopia, cooking is mainly considered 'women's work'. This belief, along with other motivating factors, has shaped the intergenerational learning related to cooking in the country. People are motivated to learn cooking for different reasons. For many girls like Genet, 23 (eldest daughter of Yeshi and Aderaw), it is rooted in social expectations and peer pressure. She told us:

> " I started to cook doro wot[6] only recently. Of course, I have been watching Yeshi (my mom) cooking before, but I never thought of trying. And when I became older, I heard my friends saying that they can cook doro wot, proudly, as this dish is difficult to prepare. I found out from all my friends that it was only me who do not know how to cook doro wot. I also heard elders saying that a woman has to be perfect in her cooking skills by the time she gets married; especially, she has to perfect this dish, doro wot. I heard people talking disapprovingly about women without such skill. At work, I heard my colleagues talking about the same thing; they used to laugh at women who said that they cannot cook doro wot. I thought they would laugh at me if I continued like that, so I was motivated to learn. [...] Then I asked my mother to let me try. "

For people like Yeshi and her niece Tarfie, cooking is not just another household skill but also a matter of work (livelihood). Both started to work as housemaids at an early age and cooking was one of their job requirements

or activities and are good examples of the deep rooted traditional belief of cooking is for females.

The families we met in Bahir Dar told us that if they don't have daughters who can help with the chores, they do let their sons learn to cook. Anegagregn's and Gebresillassie's family are examples of such cases.

By contrast, we did not find the belief that cooking is women's work in Awramba families. This is not surprising as the community is explicitly committed to challenging and unlearning these deep- rooted traditional gender roles. Reflecting on this different experience in Awramba, Godana admitted that before Zumra involved him in cooking tasks in the community , he hadn't known how to cook or do other household chores, even after marriage, as he believed it was his wife's job. He narrated what motivated people like him to learn cooking and other household chores:

> " Zumra says 'if we do 'women's work we may bring change and add to our skills but it won't change our masculinity'. He is right. We are the ones who benefit from it. For example, if I couldn't cook, it would be us who may have to spend the night with an empty stomach. If the woman in the house is sick and there is no one else to cook, she would be forced to get up to cook even if she is sick. And that would hurt her a lot. So learning to do the household chores is not a bad idea; it brought us solutions to all such kind of expected problems`. [...] The fact that a man doing the house chores is good as he is helping his wife and it is handy for desperate times. It won't be that much a problem for me if I lived alone as I can do the chores by myself. [...] "

In Bahir Dar, the learning process is also gendered as the majority of our interviewees indicated that they had learned either from their mothers, from female relatives and/or female neighbours. Like most people, Yeshi, one of the mothers we met in Bahir Dar, credits her mother, her aunt and her employers for teaching her how to cook and to prepare local beverages.

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[6]Doro Wot is chicken stew which is a famous traditional Ethiopian dish, and involves a long and challenging process to prepare

Similarly, Tarfie and Genet told us that they had learnt to bake 'injera' by trial and error from Yeshi (aunt and mother respectively) when an opportunity was given to them. Tarfie recalled how she had started to bake injera when Yeshi's younger son was just an infant; he used to cry a lot and one day, started to cry while Yeshi was baking injera. Because she had to go and feed him, she asked Tarfie to try baking. Tarfie baked until Yeshi finished feeding the baby. She continued to practice the skill when similar incidents occurred. Genet was able to practice preparing injera alongside her mother till she was able to bake on her own.

A man baking injera in Awramba, presumed to be women's role in other parts of Ethiopia

Tarfie and Genet also mentioned that they had learnt to cook different types of food through watching others do the cooking. Collaborative types of learning were also reflected as a way of learning to cook. Genet narrated her experience of learning how to cook *doro wot.*

> " The difficult part of cooking doro wot is to separate the body parts of the chicken properly. And me and my mother sat together and she would show me how to cut out one side of the leg, and I would do the other side, she did one wing and I would follow by doing the other side. [...] The chicken parts are good for training as they have two of each!. I learned this way. "

Genet mentioned that she too had benefited from her mother's training. Yeshi once participated in a six month training on cooking offered by a local NGO. The training provided trainees with a written manual for recipes which Yeshi took home with her. Genet said that she has read the manual (informal intentional learning) in order to cook for the family.

All these methods highlight the importance of practice to acquiring cooking skills. The collaborative learning Genet mentioned combines demonstration followed by imitation and practice. Learning by observing and trial error works well in positive home environments like Yeshi's and foster learning. Tarfie said that when she came to live with Yeshi, she encouraged her to try cooking, even if she may mess things up, and Genet remembered that she had never got the opportunity to cook when she was living with her father during her parents' separation. But after they got remarried, this changed. Her mother, Yeshi, used to ask her to cook for the family when she was away from home. To begin with, Genet used to wait for Yeshi to cook after she peeled onions or cleaned the dishes. But after a while, she started to watch and help her mother to cook and eventually, began to cook on her own.

All the families and parents (mothers in some) we interviewed who had learnt from their parents (mothers), were in turn engaged in transferring their cooking skills to their children. We found out more about the (inter) generational character of cooking when Yeshi told us that she had transferred her cooking skills to her daughter (Genet) and her niece (Tarfie). From Yeshi, we also learned that it is not only parents who get to teach their

children to cook: she told us that she had learnt many things from her daughter. Genet often attends different events like weddings or birthday parties. This allows her to see different dishes, how they are served or how many types of dishes were served in a buffet. So Genet has made it a habit to come home and tell her mother about the event and whenever she comes across a new type of food, she gets the recipe and tells Yeshi so that she can cook it. Tarfie has been showing her little niece Damot, who is 10 and currently living with her, how to cook. On one occasion, Tarfie showed her parents and family who live in the countryside, some non-traditional dishes. She said:

> 66 They were not used to eating things like pasta or macaroni. I learned this from Yeshi and my employer, and I showed them how it is prepared. I showed them not only how to cook but also how to eat such dishes properly. In the past, when they came to the city and if they were served with pasta to eat, they didn't like it and didn't know how to eat it. They used to say it looks like a worm. They don't say that anymore as they are used to it after I showed them. 99

In Awramba, learning related to cooking goes beyond family members and is about breaking and unlearning gender role stereotypes. There, the families mentioned that they try to transfer their values not only to the community members but to others who are outside the community. In some compounds in their village, there are tenants who are not members of the community. Because they live together with the community, they observe the villagers doing things differently. Now, the men have learned from Awramba men and have started to bake injera for themselves and to cook meals. In general, we can see how changes in the traditional gender role division in Awramba has enabled members of the community as well as other people from outside the community but who live in Awramba village, to engage in learning new knowledge, skills and values (e.g. men cooking or women farming) informally.

Cooking as an indigenous skill is transferred intergenerationally by women (mothers, wives, relatives, employers etc) generally to the younger generation. They pass down the knowledge they have both in terms of traditional recipes and ways of cooking, through demonstration. On the other hand, with new ways of cooking, recipes or types of food, are young people are the sources of knowledge. In a few cases, we saw the use of written recipes as a practice in families. For example, Genet's use of recipes (from the manual that her mother received during a training course) can be mentioned here.

Intergenerational Learning in Handicrafts

We identified handicrafts as a long existing intergenerational practice in the sites we researched. In this section, four distinct handicrafts will be discussed: weaving, horn crafts, bamboo crafts and fly whisk making.

Weaving

In Ethiopian society, in the days when factory-made cloths were not common, weaver-made cloths were the norm. Weaving used to be an activity undertaken by men only. However, in the present day Awramba, weaving is being undertaken as a means of livelihood whereby all members (women and men alike) learn the skill. Weavers, along with other traditional craftspeople, have long been despised and discriminated against in Ethiopia history. Weaving is a widespread practice both at individual family levels and at community-cooperative level. The reason behind the acquisition of weaving skills by members of the Awramba community is that they do not have enough land to farm on (Mrs. Sirash, Mr. Zemedkun, Mr. Godana, Mrs. Sumeya, Mr. Shemsu, Mrs. Tekebay, Mr. Zimtaw).

A number of factors have enabled the Awramba community to learn and practice the skills required for making weaving an important livelihood aside from the lack of diverse livelihood options: their readiness for change, openness to learning and problem-solving

approach, thinking, availability of weaving skills (training) from inside the community, the local government, and from NGOs, the availability of and access to market to get the raw materials and to sell weaving products.

Like other families in the community, Godana, one of the weavers we visited in Awramba, has a weaving corner in his home where he works during his spare time and the other family members can learn the skill. He told us that he learned traditional weaving from his father's friend. His father was also a weaver and he used to watch his father working in the house. Later, when his father died, in order to support his family, he learned to weave using his father's weaving tools. Other families we visited told us that they had learnt weaving from Zumra and a few other founding members of the community like Godana, after they became members of the community.

Horn crafts

In Awi Zone, we found that the community is known for horn crafting skills. The horn craftsmen we visited told us that this is a typical skill associated with the Awi community, one that has been practiced over generations. Dinku, 30, and Awoke, 68, learned the skill from their own fathers at their home, who in turn were taught by their fathers. Shumie, another craftsman, told us that he learned it from his grandfather. He told us that their forefathers used to use water/food containers made of horn when they went to defend their country from colonizers. He explained:

> Our fathers told us about how this skill came to our society. They tell us about a man who lived a long time ago in our society. That man was facing challenges in his life. So he wanted to have something new that would help him make his life better. So they say he went to a place called Wollega in the western part of Ethiopia in search of knowledge and he came back with two of them, steel works and horn cup making. He set up a place for his work in his hometown and started to teach his knowledge and skill to many. Since then, the society understood its relevance to making a good living.

Such kind of stories made him proud of having this skill to transfer to the next generation.

As Awoke, Dinku and Shumie told us, horn crafting requires a series of skills, starting from operating the tools, selecting a good horn and choosing the appropriate type that fits with a certain design. Then one has to heat the horn with fire to make it flexible to shape it, cut it, make it smooth, carve patterns and making it shine.

All the three people we spent time with gained this skill within the family and was knowledge that had been passed down from generation to generation.

The process of cup making from horn (Awoke and Dinku working)

Bamboo crafts

We also met two families who were engaged in bamboo crafting. This is also considered to be one of the oldest practices in the Awi Zone. During our visit, we saw bamboo plants everywhere in the living compounds of different families. We also saw bamboo craftsmen here and there, making various bamboo products, many of which were displayed in the market places. We met Chekole's family at their home workshop where they make chairs, tables and other products from bamboo sticks. And Metasebiya, 35-year-old bamboo craftsman, in his workshop and in the marketplace. Chekole, 22-year-old bamboo craftsman and his two brothers, were working on chairs when we visited; we observed them measuring, cutting, splitting, drilling and putting the pieces together with such precision and amazing speed. Before we knew it, it took the shape of a chair.

They told us they had learnt all these skills from their father. The eldest of the three brothers, Chekole, said he had also taught his younger brothers, who are 18 and 16. Chekole said that he had been working since he was 18 and had travelled to other parts of the country to work as a bamboo craftsman. He told us that bamboo crafting is a widely spread skill in the country but that the majority of bamboo craftsmen spread all over the country making different products are from Awi Zone. Hence, they consider this skill to be one of the manifestations of their culture.

Fly whisk making

The other craftsmen we had a chance to meet with while in the Awi Zone were the fly whisk makers. We joined them and spent some time talking with them while they were working at the side of the main street in the busiest part of town. The main street is their work place and their market place; they advertise their work as well as attract customers.

We were told that the Awi people have a long history of making fly whisks from horsehair. This is linked with their close attachment to horses. The fly whisk makers believe that this type of work is integral to their community's identity and therefore believe they have an obligation to teach this to their children. They also believe that their skill enables them to introduce/ advertise their own culture to others, while helping them to have an income.

Fly whisks displayed at the market place

Bamboo chair making (Chekole's younger brothers in the workshop in their living compound)

Characteristics of Intergenerational Learning in Crafts

Regarding intergenerational learning in the above-mentioned crafts, we observed that the central modes of learning are apprenticeship and observation. We also observed that learning is collaborative and gradual.

We noticed the apprenticeship model of learning in almost all the handicrafts we had a chance to visit: weaving in Awramba, horn crafting, and bamboo crafting in Awi zone. The story of Mr. Godana, one of the founding members of the Awramba community, is presented as a showcase for the learning and transfer of traditional weaving skill. For Mr. Godana, weaving was the first skill was exposed as his father was a weaver and he learned it at a young age:

> I used to watch him weaving when I was little. He died when I was 12. My mother didn't have any job to earn an income to raise us. She couldn't find anyone who could farm the land for her as we were not old enough or skilled. So she started to hand spin cotton yarns and sell it to weavers. I used to help her by taking the cotton yarns to the weavers. Then I thought and told her I should weave the cotton yarns instead of selling them to other weavers. She said 'how?' as I didn't know how. Then I promised to myself that at least I have to make 'Gabi'**7** for myself. Then I collected all my dad's weaving equipment and went to one of the weaver's houses (my dad's friend) to learn. When I asked him to teach me, he was very happy. I stayed at his house for seven days and he showed me everything. Within the seven days I made nine arm long cloth (Shema) so I collected everything and went back home. I got used to it like this and to practice more. I made one cloth for each member of my family and through that, I mastered it and was able to support my family.

We also observed the apprenticeship type of learning in bamboo crafting and horn crafting. The young man in Metasebiya's workshop explained how he had learnt bamboo crafting from Metasebiya. He said they were neighbors and he had asked Metasebiya to show him how to do what he does. He said he used to visit him after school two or three times a week to learn all the skills he needed to know. After a while, he started to work on his own. Awoke and Dinku also mentioned that people who are interested come to them to learn. They buy and bring horn to work on or sometimes they use defective horns in the workshop. They stay under the supervision of Awoke and Dinku for a couple of days or weeks and leave when they are skilled.

Observation was also mentioned as a way of learning. Mainly it was reflected in Shumie's way of learning horn crafts from his grandfather. He said he had learnt this skill simply by watching his grandfather doing it:

> For me it was easy, I was already craftsman because I had few skills in steel work and the tools were not new to me. I made them by my own hands and the rest was easy. I watched my grandfather working then later I went home and started to practice by myself.

We also find collaborative elements of learning in the transfer of such skills. In Awramba, where weaving is the main livelihood, most family members practise weaving. Godana, like others in the community, says that all the members of his family know how to weave:

> All my children know how to weave. I have taught them step by step. They used to watch me doing it and then I made them help me to do simple tasks. First, I made them start with wrapping or spinning, or other related activities. When I thought they were strong enough to work on the machine, I let them.

7Gabi is a traditional handmade cloth worn by Ethiopians over the shoulders and sometimes as blanket. It is made of cotton.

By its very nature, weaving has several sub-tasks which normally require the help of others (see photo below). This is where the contribution of family members (children) comes in. When children start helping their parents with different tasks, they become familiar with the whole skill and continue to learn the other activities to become fully skilled weavers. In another study on weavers (Gizaw and Warkineh, forthcoming), we also noted that the seat of the main weaver is built in such a way that it accommodates another person (who sits next to the weaver and learns the skills).

Godana's family in Awramba engaged in different weaving tasks, showing the collaborative nature of the task and the learning

Learning to make fly whisks had similar characteristics as shared by all three fly whisk makers. Mebratu and Tewabe, cousins in their early 30s who work as fly whisk makers in Awi Zone, told us that they had learnt the craft while sitting with their brothers, helping them to separate horsehair and observing how their brothers made the whisk. This is the same method Demissie is using to enable his six children to learn while helping him, thereby speeding up the whisk making process. Demissie also mentioned that fly whisk makers sit in groups and we witnessed this during our visit, where four of them were sitting together, sharing ideas and experiences while working. Demissie told us that they interact, asking questions about work or other things and above all, learning from each other. He said that if one of them has a better way of doing something, he shares it with others and this way, they learn from each other.

We also found that learning is a gradual process: even if it is not structured, it goes from simple to complex patterns. Dinku's reflection on how he learned horn crafting from his father illustrates this point.

Fly whisk makers at their work/market place

He said that at the beginning, his father would make him observe what he was doing, what materials and tools he was using and how he used them. After that, he started to give him small tasks related to the main work, such as making fire, chopping fire wood and the like. While doing these he was able to practise how to use one of the tools, the axe. Then he was given the responsibility to cut the tip of the horn with the axe. It was after mastering these skills that he was allowed to take part in the main work. He reflected:

> There are five main processes in horn crafts till the final product is completed. And most of the time the work is done in groups, for efficiency purposes. One person would be working on one process and pass it on to the next person who is responsible for the next process. It continues like that till the end. Just like that, my learning process was also gradual and step by step process. I was allowed to progress to the next level when I was able to complete one step by myself.

As he and the other craftsmen put it, the learning process has a pattern, from simple to complex: they were allowed to do the simplest tasks at the beginning and then progress. Dinku, for example, was made to start with the simplest task which involves cutting the tip of the horn, before moving on to more complex tasks that require attention and patience. He said that no one can master the whole process at a time.

One has to progress through time: the skill one has in the current year will be different from the previous year. One's skills grows with experience.

We also notice that many of the learning processes and practices are strongly gendered. During our visit, we saw men working as horn craftsmen and bamboo craftsmen in the town but didn't see any women working in these two types of crafting. We were told there are women working on bamboo making products like baskets and adornments for the home, which the craftsmen referred to as a 'modern' way of bamboo crafting. However, as Awoke and Shumie explained, women are not encouraged to participate in horn crafting. Both said that this type of work is not good for women as it is exhausting and needs strength. Because of this belief, Awoke didn't let his daughter learn the skill with her brother when he taught him at home. Shumie said he didn't forbid his daughters but just didn't encourage them to learn the skill with his sons.

On the other hand, we were told that both men and women engage in fly whisk making, even though we didn't get a chance to meet women engaged in this work. For this type of work, the learning context is itself gendered. In the above section, the market place was mentioned as a space where the skill of fly whisk- making is learnt. We were told that it is different for women as they have additional responsibilities at home. Women don't sit like many men fly whisk makers on the street. If they get the chance to learn or practice, it will be at home, in their residential area, while they are doing other chores, for example, while they are making the local alcoholic drink 'areqi'.

Literacy use in crafts

Through our interviews we learnt that literacy and numeracy were put to use in these livelihoods. Metasebiya told us that when he was just learning to become a bamboo craftsman from his father's friend, he used to take notes of the instructions he was given:

> When I have to drill the bamboo stick, he used to put marks with a pencil where I have to make a hole at the beginning. And I used to follow those marks. Later on, I started to write notes on a piece of paper to remind myself of the measurements, and with what distance I have to make a hole or cut. So, I used to check my notes whenever I was not sure.

Fly whisk makers also mentioned that offering customized fly whisks as a gift for Christmas or epiphany has become popular. For that, people /their customers/ order them to engrave names, birthdates or years in the ornamented design of the fly whisk handle. They say that being literate helps them to do this and make a good deal of money as the customized fly whisks are more expensive than the regular ones. In an earlier collaborative study, the team learnt that fly whisk makers ask literacy facilitators in the area to teach them how to read and write as their competitive job requires it (Rogers, forthcoming).

Personalized traditional fly whisks made from horse tail hair with name and year written on the handle

Names, dates/years or addresses of people are engraved in Amharic, Awingi or English on the handle of fly whisks with their customer orders. All said that this kind of work was not known when they were first introduced to it by their brothers and friends.

Similarly, Shumie said it helped to learn various ways of making objects from horn. He said:

> " My grandfather was illiterate; he was only able to make a cup out of horn. But I can make all sorts of things, like jewelry, home adornments or utensils. I use a measuring tape to see exactly where I have to cut to find the exact shape I need. If I were illiterate, I couldn't read the measures. It would have been difficult for me to do such new designs. "

In contrast to Shumie's reflections, Chekole and his 18 year-old brother, Andualem, said that using a measuring tape and reading the measurements in metres or centimetres, is very crucial in bamboo crafting as they have to cut equal sticks or make holes with equal gaps. They even said that those who cannot read the numbers use measuring tapes by putting marks on the tape with a pencil and they follow that mark when they have to cut.

Godana, in Awramba, also mentioned that when he first learned how to weave, he couldn't read and write so he just copied ways of measurements that were commonly practised at that time. He would measure the yarn or cloth with his arm, which was the traditional way of measurement. A two-arm length of an adult is assumed to be equal to a metre. But after learning to write and read, he started to use a measuring tape to measure and write measurements. Mebratu, Tewabe and Demissie, fly whisk makers in Awi Zone, said they don't use a measuring tool while working but use the traditional way of using the 'sinzer' – the length from the tip of one's thumb to the tip of the middle finger - to balance the length of the handle and horse hair.

In addition to this, most of the interviewed craftsmen said that they keep records of sales, purchases and the like. Shumie, a craftsman in Awi zone, said that although his daughters didn't have that much involvement in the horn making process, they are involved in the family business through helping to keep records. He and his daughters record purchases for raw materials, their sales and all the expenses incurred to know their profits. He also said that this helped him to determine the price of each product he makes. Dinku, Mebratu, Tewabe and Demissie engaged in similar practices.

To sum up, these skills are mainly transferred to others through the apprenticeship model of learning which includes observing and practising under the supervision of the experienced craftsmen or simply learning by observing and imitation. In some cases, young apprentices stay in the homes of the skilled craftsmen until they have fully mastered the skill (as in the case of Godana learning weaving). In other cases, they might visit a craftsman a few days a week or for a few hours a day while living with their parents (as in Metasebiya and his young neighbor, learning bamboo crafting and others coming to Dinku's work place to learn horn crafts). When children are trained at home to master this skill, they are first given responsibility to complete simpler tasks to help their parents and through this process, they learn all the necessary skills related to the specific craft they are being trained, together with the social skills they gain from working side by side with their parents/ adults. This illustrates the collaborative aspect of the learning process. We found that the learning and practising of some crafts is also found to be influenced by gendered beliefs and roles. The use of literacy and numeracy is also illustrated in these examples in the use of record-keeping and measurements. We have also shown how in some cases it has brought about a change in the craft itself, as in making customized fly whisks.

Traditional church/religious education

For several centuries, the dominant form of education in Ethiopia was provided by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (known by different names: *'yeabinet timihirt'*, *'yebetekihinet timihirt' 'yekes timihirt'*), until western education was introduced in 1908. Those who passed through church education not only went on to serve the church as deacons, priests, *merigeta*[8] and others, but also worked in different government structures. Although it has become less dominant since the starting of formal schooling, it continues to exist mainly in northern and central parts of the country.

In Awi Zone, we visited a family that has attended church education over generations, to find out more about the nature of traditional church education. The stories of father and son church educators *merigeta* Sahilu (in his 70s) and his son priest Tedla (in his early 30s) can give insights into family-based intergenerational and informal religious literacy learning.

Merigeta Sahilu attended church education over 17 years. He remembers his church education journey as follows:

> I started church education when I was nine. After studying the first two phases with my father for three years, my elder brother and I moved to other places to continue with other contents. We were moving here and there in search of the best teachers... not every teacher is best in all aspects of church education; one might be best in kine/poetry, others might be best in zema/music…. Unfortunately, our father passed away before we completed our studies and we had to go back home. My elder brother took on my father's role in the family and advised me to continue with my studies to the maximum so that the family tradition of learning the knowledge and skills of religious education would not be broken.

> I wanted to stay so I insisted a lot because it was my brother who used to beg food for me. However, my mother forced me, saying 'your father warned us not to let you stop your church education…'. This persuaded me and so I continued with my studies. I wanted to continue to the maximum level and be witnessed in my performance by religious leaders based in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, my parents and my previous teachers asked me to quit my studies to serve the church. Thus, the seventeen years journey of church education had to end there…I couldn't go beyond merigeta level! I started serving the church and started the teaching journey at the age of 27…

From *merigeta* Sahilu's narration above, it can be said that traditional church education consists of different stages/phases and that not all levels/phases are learnt in one place or from a single teacher. A person can study for several years to cover the different levels and phases of church education which has different contents, phases and sub-phases. The phases are (not necessarily subsequent, except for the first one): reading, liturgy, music, poetry, church dancing and literature but one is not expected to learn these contents and pass sequentially through every phase/step; rather, one can learn what one likes and what one can and the time needed to complete each content and phase varies, with every student learning at their own pace. A person who completes all phases and contents of the church education, which sometimes takes up to 40 years, is known as *'arat ayna'* [literally, 'the one with four eyes'], meaning, having excellent knowledge in music, poetry, church dancing and literature. As all the contents/phases of church education are not available in one place, learners may have to move to different places, far from home, as *merigeta* Sahilu and his brother did. As we were told, when students finish some part of their education in one place and move to learn other contents in another place, they are tested on what they have learnt by church educators/teachers in the new location.

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[8] Merigeta is a title given to traditional church educators in Ethiopian Orthodox Church

We learnt that while oral instruction is a dominant teaching method, memorizing by heart is a dominant method of learning. During our observations at merigeta Sahilu's living compound, we noted that peer learning is also used (depicted in the picture below); those who master a content are then responsible for supporting newcomers or students who have not yet mastered those contents. The medium of instruction is Amharic and Ge'ez.

After students have mastered the first phase (reading school), those who want to pursue their career in church service will continue like merigeta Sahilu did. Those who want to pursue Western education will join primary school, start from 1st grade; others manage to attend both side by side. For instance, Tedla started formal schooling after he became a Deacon and learnt the priest education while he was attending primary school. Although merigeta Sahilu did not attend state school himself, he told us that the state school system is inferior to traditional church education. He justified this assertion as follows:

> In state schools, children keep taking notes when they learn something and then forget it instantly. But in our case, once you learn and master something, you will remember it forever. When you are asked to teach or to serve in the church, you will not say 'I forgot it…let me check it from my notebook'. You simply read it from your heart effortlessly. A person who specializes in metsihaf bet (literature), for instance, memorizes the old and new testaments in the Bible by heart.

Learning in traditional church education: learning from one another in their teacher's living compound, Awi Zone

Traditional church education can also be characterized as intergenerational. For instance, we noticed that Sahilu's father, grandfather and great grandfather were all church educators and had transferred their knowledge to their own children and to other interested children/young people in the community. Sahilu himself has six sons and with the exception of one who has moved away to learn some contents, all of them have learnt from him. Now two of them are deacons, while the other two have reached the level of priesthood and one has made it to the merigeta level. Sahilu also proudly reported that he has taught several people who have gone on to become deacons, priests and merigetas. Along with the central contents of church education, he has also been transferring his skill of preparing brana [a paper made of goat skin], different inks from plants, pens from bamboo and the skills of writing on brana. He explained:

> In addition to the first two phases of church education, my father taught me how to write on goat skin and how to prepare the writing ingredients. In the past, we [church educators/teachers] used to develop different teaching materials [alphabets and reference books] as there were no typewriters or printing machines. Therefore, being skilled in writing on brana was essential to be a church educator/teacher. Even if typing and printing is not an issue at this time, I have passed this skill to my students because I wish to preserve the skill.

Traditional church education has different modalities. One is where students live with their parents and learn all the content from their fathers, elder brothers or other relatives in their residential area. A good example of this modality is Tedla (fourth son of merigeta Sahilu, married and father of a girl), who became a priest after learning from his father, who himself learnt partly from his father. The other modality is where students still live with their parents but learn from teachers available in their village by exchanging their labour (farming, gardening, cattle herding). During our observation, we saw twenty-eight children and young people in merigeta Sahilu's living compound who were learning while helping their teacher in different ways (harvesting vegetables etc.).

Some of Merigeta Sahilu's students studying after helping him with harvesting 'Gesho' [Rhamnus prinoides] (leaves of this plant are used to make local alcoholic beverages 'tella' and 'areqi')

The third modality is where students move to other places to study, building small houses for themselves around churches and monasteries where the teacher resides. In this modality, as Sahilu explained, students pass through different hardships as they are expected to beg for their food from community members every day. Not only do they lack of food items but also electricity, water, sanitary materials and medical services. In some cases, they offer their labour to cover some of their living costs. It is not uncommon to see such students in different churches and monasteries in Ethiopia. The fourth modality is a combination of the three: they learn some content from their parents/relatives, other content from other teachers in their village in the form of an apprenticeship and move to other places to complete the remaining contents, sometimes in search of a better teacher. We noted that Sahilu and his brother had followed this trajectory from his story above.

Regarding learning spaces, church education can take place in different spaces/contexts (in teachers' homes, in church or in the monasteries).

Traditional church education is also gendered. According to merigeta Sahilu, although females are not explicitly prohibited from entering the church education but are discouraged from doing so:

> They are discouraged to participate as they are not allowed to deliver most religious services (or to become a deacon, a priest or merigeta) so attending church education is a complete waste of time for them. Even if they want to learn, they wouldn't be able to stand the hardship of moving from place to place and begging for food items. Moreover, if they participate in church education, it is assumed that the male students will get distracted. Due to these reasons, almost in all cases, females do not participate in indigenous church education. Some may attend reading and writing phases and a few may continue to 'kine/poetry' level.

Conclusion

This section has provided a snapshot of indigenous practices and learning modalities in Bahir Dar, Awramba and Awi zone. All the families we interviewed in all sites were found to have experienced learning and transferring at least two indigenous practices or skill sets. Although elders were the main sources of knowledge, young people were also identified to be sources in some cases. In the case of cooking, where younger people were the sources of knowledge, they were found to bring a new way of cooking, a new recipe, taste or ingredient or even a new way of learning. For example, Genet learned informally through attending various festivities and then shared this learning with her mother. In transferring knowledge and skills related to health, cooking, making crafts and church education, various ways of learning and knowledge transfer were identified. Interviewees described observation, oracy, collaborative learning, apprenticeship, learning by doing where one observes and imitates while the other demonstrates or practising the task through a step by step process, peer learning and even learning through experimenting.

In the case of cooking and some health practices, crafts and church education, we found gendered practices. For example, in Bahir Dar some indigenous health practices are performed only by men or women and cooking was found to be viewed as a woman's job. As elsewhere in Ethiopia, in Bahir Dar and in Awi Zone, women are not encouraged to learn horn crafts because it is considered to be too difficult for them. Similarly, they are discouraged from engaging in church education because women are not allowed to provide most of the church services and due to the hardship of the learning process. In Awramba, by contrast, where the community can be seen as an extended family, gender stereotyped beliefs about cooking, weaving and other livelihood skills were being unlearned and roles relearned to ensure gender equality. The process of learning to cook, to weave and other skills are used as a showcase to demonstrate/transfer the values of gender equality and women's empowerment to the younger generation and to the surrounding society.

Limited use of literacy was observed in the indigenous health and cooking practices in our study sites. Most of the indigenous health practices were only transmitted orally, although in spiritual healing practices, literacy was put into use when priests read out prayers for the patient. Oral transfer was observed in most cooking practices with the exception of the sharing of written recipes. The use of literacy in handcrafting and in traditional church education was also discussed. In most crafts, literacy and numeracy were used to facilitate the learning, making and marketing of products. In church education, learners engage in reading and writing throughout the different phases. They read from different religious books and are expected to memorize everything by heart. Some also engage in special writing skills 'yekum tsihuf' which are commonly found in 'brana' books.

Learning Digital Literacy and Social Change

The families we visited reported using different types of digital technology in their everyday activities. This section describes and discusses how people learn these new digital technologies and how the learning builds on and transforms indigenous practices and/or lives.

Digital Literacy Learning in Families – (Inter)generational Learning

Our respondents own and use mobile phones, TV, calculators, etc. This sub-section presents the (inter)generational nature of digital literacy learning as well as the devices and modalities. Many of our respondents said that they had learnt how to use mobile phones in different contexts, from friends, siblings, relatives or colleagues at work. For example, Ayele, 22-year-old son of Aneageregn and Misgana from Bahir Dar, had learnt how to operate a mobile phone from his uncle who gave him a broken phone when he was very young and later, from his friends who brought their mobile phones to school. He learned by observing them using their phones.

Tarfie learned how to turn on and off the TV from Aderaw through demonstration and oral explanation. Regarding mobile phones, she said that she learned through observing members of her family using it; when she bought one for herself later on, she didn't find it difficult. She also indicated that she used to ask her employer for help when she faced difficulties. Now, Tarfie lets her niece Rachel (youngest daughter of Yeshi and Aderaw) use her smart phone to listen to religious songs. Rachel also confirmed that she is able to make and receive calls, although she is just a child.

Rachel using Tarfie's smart phone

Some of our respondents argued it is possible to learn how to operate digital technology devices through self-learning. For example, Selam, a young girl from Awramba, suggested that whether it is a computer, a TV or mobile phone, one can learn through practising on one's own. She said: *"We can read what is written and we touch and try to see what those things do"*

Only two families we interviewed had computers in their homes, Anegagregn and Shemsu. One of Anegagregn's sons said that he had observed Ayele (see his brief story below), their older brother, had worked out how to use the computer by practising and he then showed his younger brother how to do it.

Ayele is a multi-skilled young man. We were fascinated with his self-initiated learning, digital source of learning and accidental learning from others. He is engaged in different jobs requiring him to have various skills, for example, setting up and fixing satellite dishes, repairing different electric appliances, woodwork and shelf making, fixing curtains and furniture in new homes. He told us that he picked up most of his skills and understanding about how to make shelves and other things from searching for and watching tutorials on Youtube. His first self-initiated learning experience was fixing satellite dishes. Ayele now is very keen to transfer all his skills to his younger brothers and friends who watch him at work. He said he prefers to watch such educational videos on Youtube in his spare time, than watching other type of movies.

Children using their father's smart phone in a family in Awramba

All the parent respondents in our study said that they had learnt how to use mobile phones and operate TV mainly from their children. Even for those who initially learnt how to operate mobile phones and TV from others like colleagues, friends or by trial and error, indicated that their children are always there to show them how to use and do things.

For example, Godana in Awramba, was given a few instructions on how to use his mobile phone from members of the committee when they gave him the phone he is using while Anegagregn, in Bahir Dar, learned through trial and error.

Both admitted, after they started to use mobile phones, that their children continued to show and tell them how to do new things with their phones.

As we learnt from merigeta Sahilu, from Awi Zone, he has a hand watch which he is not able to read as it is written in Arabic numbers so his students read it for him. *"Had it been Ge'ez/Ethiopic number, I could have read it by myself. When I give tasks to my students, I would allocate time for each of them. I needed the watch for that purpose".*

Older brother using his father's laptop and showing his younger brother how to download materials

Some fly whisk makers also said that they learned about additional phone functions from customers while they are working. For example, they mentioned that they learned about Telegram (a social media app) and how to use it from their customers who were taking pictures of fly whisks and sending them to others to decide which to order.

Mothers like Mrs Zuriash and Yeshi access the functions of mobile phones through mediators. Mrs Zuriash is unable to read or write and described her day to day experience with mobile phones as follows:

> " I only use it to receive calls. I don't even know how to call others. I just answer calls when my phone rings then hang up when I finish. […] I find out who is calling me only after I answered the call. I ask 'who is this?' […] My children recharge the balance for me. […] If the children are not available, I have to ask one of the tenants in our compound and they help me. […] If there is no one around to ask, I do nothing. "

The type of phone they have and what they want to get from their mobile phones, shapes the content, method and source of learning. Some of the respondents use their phones as calculators, clocks, alarms, radio, camera, torch and the internet (Facebook); younger respondents reported that they also use their mobile phones for reading. It was reported that they use their phones to read the news and different information on Facebook, Telegram and other social media and to chat with friends. Apart from the above mentioned uses, they also download and listen to music and gospel songs. Young people like Hanna (in her twenties) and other children still in school, use their phones mostly for reading school- related materials. The students said that they are given e-books as textbooks textbooks in Awramba and they use their phones to read them. Similarly, Hanna said:

> " Most of us use our smart phones for reading. We can use our phones for our studies, receive important files and even use files on a flash disk, for example handouts, PPT files can be easily viewed and we can read these on our mobile phones. "

TV use is also common in all the households we visited. Almost all members of the families can turn on and off the TV. They watch the news, get health information (some family members in Awramba reported that they heard about COVID-19 from TV), information about current issues, politics, watch movies, TV dramas and the like. We observed that the types of mobile phone used by parents and children are different. Parents seemed to all use small button phones with limited applications while we saw the children using advanced smart phones. Among the parents, we noticed that the women seemed to prefer to have smaller button phones which didn't have too many functions and used these phones mainly for making and receiving calls to/from friends and relatives.

To sum up, we found that our respondents learn to use digital technology such as mobile phones from their siblings, children, friends, relatives or colleagues at work. The methods through which they learnt include observation, oral explanation and demonstration, trial and error and self-learning. It was found that those who do not use the mobile phone themselves, get access to it through mediators.

Engaging Critically with Information on Digital Media

Most of our adult respondents were critical to and engage critically with, the information they obtain from digital media. For example, Yeshi heard different news from Facebook through her daughter. But she said she doesn't like all the false information that is disseminated via Facebook. She believes that it is creating unrest in the country; it is creating a huge gap between people from different ethnic and religious groups. Godana, from Awramba, also addressed this issue, saying that because of the false information regularly posted there, he doesn't share all the information he sees on Facebook with the family. He told us:

> When I watch the news I read on Facebook being transmitted on a local news channel, I know that it is correct information. I don't tell my family all the things I read; first I try to find out if the information is not a lie and tell them only if it is credible.

While adults do engage critically with the information they access through the internet, children are less able to be discerning. We observed that while children are generally digitally more literate than their parents, they do not have the same capacity to engage critically. While recognising the value of such skills and the potential of the digital world to widen children's horizons and aspirations, we identified the need to develop critical literacy within the family.

Rachel is an eight – year- old girl, Yeshi's youngest daughter, who was born and raised in Bahir Dar. She is a grade one student. As she is the youngest child and that all other family members are at work during the day, she is at home alone long periods of time. She has access to a smart phone and TV. She told us that she can use a mobile phone and she can turn on the TV, change and search channels; her sister and niece taught her how to do this. [...] Informing us about what she saw recently on TV, she said:

> I have seen a TV program that there are bad persons who kidnap people and ask for ransom money in Ethiopia. And if my parents ever got kidnapped, I will follow them with my plane and I will blow up the kidnappers with a bomb. That's why I want to become a pilot.

Rachel told us that she watched this news item on one of the local news channels. In addition to this, she told us that she prefers and regularly watches a TV channel called MBC Bollywood for action movies and an Ethiopian children's channel, along with news channels.

Digital Literacy as Transforming Everyday Life and Livelihoods

For some of our respondents, the use of digital gadgets (mainly mobile phone) has transformed their indigenous livelihood practices. Ayele and Abayneh, from Bahir Dar have found specific applications of their phones for work purposes. Abayneh now uses his phone as a GPS device (map reading and finding directions) whereas in the past, he used to pay more attention to road signs telling him how far the next town is and other traffic information:

> If there is no distance indicator and I don't know my destination, I will use GPS on my mobile phone. One time, I was traveling with a researcher and we were driving to a new place. At one point, I was confused which direction to go. He saw that I was unable to find my way and he took out his mobile phone and used GPS. He was telling me the directions and we arrived at our destination. That is how I came to know about GPS. After that time, whenever I have a doubt about finding the direction, I will open my mobile phone data and the GPS and find out more about the direction and my destination.

Ayele also told us that he uses his phone while working to set up satellite dishes. When his network finder tool is not working, he uses his phone as a finder (to read network frequency) as he has an application for this on his phone

Ayele also uses his mobile phone to look at different shelf designs from YouTube with a view to improve the quality of his products. By doing so, he said, he is able to attract more customers and earn more. Similarly, Godana said that while he is traveling to different places, he takes pictures of different woven cloth designs and brings these back to the village to show to his friends in the weaving department so that they can learn new designs (copying new designs).

Mobile phones have also eased life for Aderaw, as his customers can call him easily if they want his services. His daughter, Genet, told us that she uses her phone to communicate with parents of the children she tutors, and for mobile banking to check her account balance and make payments, which saves her from repeated trips to the bank. Similarly, all craftsmen in Awi zone said that they use their phones all the time to make their job easier. They use it to call customers, make sales and purchases, negotiate prices, receive orders, and let their customers know their product is ready for pickup or if there is a delay.

Calculator use was also found to be useful but limited. It varied among users, either for work related purposes or in the market place. Mrs Askale, Godana's wife, for example, mentioned that she often uses a calculator, either the one on her mobile phone or a digital calculatorwhen making a sale or to know the daily sales and profits at the craft shop in Awramba.

A salesperson in Awramba craft shop using a digital calculator which she learnt at her workplace

Tekebay told us that she uses her phone to record meetings when she has no pen and paper (to take the minutes). For instance, when the Awramba `cooperative holds its biannual meetings, or when she is on reception duty, welcoming guests, if she thinks there is anything important, she records the discussion, which she can then refer to at a later time.

In our study, we found that our respondents use their mobile phones not only to facilitate existing work but to search for jobs too. For example, Hanna said that in the past, people used to search for jobs and read vacancy announcements by going to the notice boards of organizations. Now, those organizations have their own websites and people seeking jobs can apply and follow up their application on their phones.

All the above examples show that digital technology has been embraced and is being applied in ways that are facilitating and also transforming indigenous practices. However, this is not true in all cases. We found some instances of resistance to digital practices.

Notably, merigeta Sahilu, from Awi Zone, told us that he and other older people in his area, considered that a person who talks on a mobile phone is possessed, like one who talks with the Devil. He explained:

> I didn't have mobile phone for several years because I hated it; it looks like I am talking with the Devil for passersby. But then, one of my students bought me mobile phone and showed me how to use it. Unfortunately, I lost it somewhere. I now plan to buy one myself!

Some people use their mobile phones for religious purposes. For example, merigeta Sahilu's son Tedla says he uses his phone to listen to religious songs and audio sermons. Similarly, Tarfie in Bahir Dar, said she uses her phone to download new religious songs and appplications such as the Holy Bible application and the Daily Prayers application from which she reads and pray whenever she has the time. She further explained:

> ...but it is forbidden to read from the mobile when we are at church [meaning during service and sermons times]. We were told at the church that we should read only from our prayer books, not from mobile phones. [...] Most of the time one can notice that people have started to prefer mobiles from books, but after the church announced that it is forbidden to do so, this habit declined.

Based on Tarfie's reflection, when one read prayers on one's mobile, it might look to outsiders as though seems he is not praying but doing other things. This practice was mostly observed in the younger generation as the elders don't use mobile phones to read prayers. Church educators seem to be keen to keep the indigenous religious practices inside the church. Merigeta Sahilu's told us that he continues to teach his students to engage with learning materials in the traditional way in order to preserve the traditional skills, despite digital alternatives and access to printing.

To conclude, we found that our respondents own and use different digital technological devices (mobile phones, TV, etc.). They learn to use these devices in different contexts and from different sources (their siblings, children, relatives, friends, or colleagues at work) using different modalities (observation, trial and error, oral description and demonstration). We have also shown that the use of digital technology is transforming how people engage in different activities and that in many cases, digital devices, particularly the smart phone, are being integrated in their day to day lives and livelihood activities. In the case of religious practices, younger people are using their smart phones to read prayers and download devotional music but there is a certain amount of resistance from the church side, particularly the use of mobile phones to follow prayers during the church service. As digital media has proliferated, the sources and volume of information available to people, our respondents are aware of the proliferation of false or fake news and they critically engage with such information.

5 CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although family literacy policy has not been promoted in Ethiopia, elements of family literacy practices can be found in different education and development policy documents. On the ground, families and communities are actively engaged in learning a variety of indigenous knowledge and skills. We found that health practices, cooking, crafts and traditional church education are domains where indigenous/inter-generational knowledge and skills continue to be shared and transferred. Families are also engaged in digital literacy and learning in their daily life.

The study has revealed a range of family and community spaces where indigenous knowledge and skills are transferred. Families and communities learn different kinds of crafts in local marketplaces and other livelihood skills in workplaces informally (intentionally, incidentally and accidentally). The unique Ethiopian coffee ceremonies also provide valuable spaces for exchange of information, experiences and life-skills across generations, as they have done for generations. Family homes were also found to be intergenerational learning spaces that provide opportunities to family members to learn or transfer all sorts of knowledge and skills that they use in their lives. Churches and monasteries as centres for traditional church education in Ethiopia are intergenerational learning spaces where young boys and men learn to read and write from educators and from each other. While some of these spaces are less used than they were, other informal intergenerational spaces are growing and other new spaces are being created (e.g. family meetings, community library and ICT centres in Awramba).

In terms of modalities, the research demonstrates that indigenous and intergenerational learning and literacy practices are comprehensive, multi-directional and informal. For example, in the studied sites, there are diverse understandings, beliefs and approaches to health and wellbeing.

While hospitals and health centres may be available to many, intimate knowledge of herbal and spiritual healing is widespread, sometimes being used hand-in-hand with 'modern' medicine and clinicians. Policy makers should recognize the value of indigenous medicines and should work towards the recognition, formalization and parallel development of indigenous medicine and healing practices both at policy and practice levels.

The study illustrated that people transfer their indigenous knowledge in various ways while they engage in their daily activities. While elders are the main sources of such knowledge and feel a duty to transfer their knowledge to the younger generation, young people also transfer skills to older people, particularly with regards to digital literacy. Apprenticeship as a learning method was widely observed along with learning by observing in craft making and peer learning was in traditional church education. The study also shows the collaborative and intergenerational nature of craft learning and traditional church education. Both these domains provide opportunities for young and adult family members to interact together, to learn different skills, including social skills that are important for their lives. The continuation of indigenous/traditional knowledge and practices across generations informally is vital for the proper functioning of a 'modern' social system.

The study shines a light on gendered knowledge. Women's knowledge, often expressed through cooking skills, is mostly passed informally from mother to daughter or to other younger woman within the family or community. This knowledge often goes unrecognized and taken-for-granted. Ethiopia's global reputation for excellent cuisine has been cultivated and celebrated over generations. Women's family and intergenerational learning and teaching are necessary for the continuation of this knowledge, skills and reputation. Conversely, some indigenous and intergenerational learning practices are found to be highly or strongly gendered.

For example, females are discouraged from participating in traditional church education and in craft making. On the other hand, as observed in the Awramba community, these seemingly deep-rooted gender-based stereotypes can be unlearned informally and men can also learn and play the roles that have been thus far exclusively assigned to women (cooking, cleaning, caring for children etc.).

Literacy and numeracy practices are embedded in daily activities. Those who are engaged in cooking, write and read recipes, menus and schedules. Craftspeople, such as those engaged in bamboo and horn crafts, engage in both literacy and numeracy practices through keeping a record of sales and purchases, calculating prices and profits, using traditional and modern measuring devices. A notable literacy practice is that of customizing fly whisk makers which makes the products more valuable. Traditional church education, although unrecognized by the current government, provides opportunity to learn and practice literacy and numeracy. In the context of the high 'illiteracy' rate and inadequate provision of adult literacy, the sustaining of traditional church education is crucial.

In this study, members of families from all generations learn and widely practice digital literacy. Unlike with other skills, children were found to have higher expertise than their parents. The study found that people of all ages in families are innovating and incorporating IT skills, such as the use of mobile phones and the internet, into 'traditional' livelihood activities, leading to the transformation of the long-standing, indigenous/ traditional practices.

In view of the realized potentials of the digital technology in information dissemination, the study also showed that family members are critically engaged with the contents of information they get from such media. As digital literacy appears to ease and support the livelihood activities of people in the study area, recognition and further strengthening of these innovative and dynamic practices would ensure their continued contribution to the sustainability of the livelihood activities.

At the same time, parents need support with monitoring their children's use of digital devices and helping them to engage critically with digital devices.

In general, we noted that there are several factors that enable families to learn and transfer new knowledge and skills. For example, indigenous values and practices, as well as the collectivist culture in which people living in the same area have closer ties and elders are expected to provide assistance or advice to the young, create a range of opportunities to learn and transfer knowledge and skills. We have shown how people rely on indigenous values and practices, even within new learning areas. With regards to policy, the availability of physical resources that are necessary for learning (internet, mobile phones, TV, tools, etc.) and learning spaces (coffee ceremony, library, computer/internet centre, workplace, etc.), encouraging and open home environment (parents' willingness and openness), work traditions (in Awramba the application of job rotation) are among the major enabling factors that should be supported.

In the Ethiopian context, therefore, policymakers should think beyond building formal classrooms, training facilitators or providing artificial learning spaces. Instead, support should be focused on existing collective and intergenerational spaces such as the family home, work places and other indigenous spaces/settings and building on the values and practices that have been shown to nurture learning.

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