

Volunteers

Story

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## **Investing in quality early learning programmes is vital for change in Ethiopia**

Research shows that investing in quality early learning programmes is one of the most effective ways to improve a child's success in a school. In Ethiopia, children under five comprise the largest age bracket in the population. There are approximately 10 million children aged 0-3 years and seven million children aged 4-6 years. Investing in Early Child Development interventions, like early learning, is critical for the long-term prosperity of the country. Kosumo Shiraishi (Japan) served as a UN Volunteer Education Officer with UNICEF under the Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development, supporting the education sector planning and management in the country.



Host community and refugee parents with their children during the first accelerated school readiness programme at Simbile Primary School, Afar region. This innovative early learning model lasts eight weeks and targets six-year-olds from disadvantaged families in poor communities, providing quality education from trained teachers to help children who previously had no exposure to prepare them for their first school experience.

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 (Tadesse/UNICEF, 2018)

As an HRD-UN Volunteer, Kosumo Shiraiishi was assigned to the Education Sector Planning and Management unit with UNICEF Ethiopia. During the assignment, Kosumo worked in close collaboration with several units of the Learning and Development Programme, including Early Childhood Education, Access and Equity, Education in Emergencies and Quality Education and Learning. The programme also has an explicit commitment to leverage education for peacebuilding outcomes, particularly in regions where conflict has occurred between refugees and host communities.

During her assignment, Kosumo delivered a range of activities that have tangibly improved educational outcomes for many Ethiopian school-aged children.

Kosumo provided monitoring and evaluation, equity and results-focused reporting and education sector analysis for interventions of the Learning and Development Programme in support of peacebuilding through education commitments.

Kosumo's assignment saw her undertake several activities that helped education sector planning and management. She supported knowledge transfer through several editing, reporting and training initiatives. For example, Kosumo edited and published UNICEF Ethiopia's Learning and Development Programme quarterly newsletters and assisted in production of biannual reporting. She also conducted meetings and training for key stakeholders on the Ethiopian National Education Sector Plan. She also updated the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan quarterly, by gathering data from the programme.

In Early Childhood Education and the equitable expansion of quality early childhood education services, Kosumo

supported a summer initiative known as the Accelerated School-Readiness programme through monitoring and programmatic checks. This programme is an innovative early learning model that lasts eight weeks and targets six-year-olds from disadvantaged families in poor communities. It provides quality education from trained teachers to help children who previously had no access to preschools or other early learning models and prepare them for their first school experience.



**Kosumo Shiraishi served as a UN Volunteer Education Officer with UNICEF in Ethiopia. Here, she gathers information from teachers and education personnel. (UNV, 2018)**

A focus on quality education and learning is vital for change. At the primary school level, Kosumo supported equitable and improved delivery of quality primary education by conducting programmatic checks in the field on the Assessment for Learning. She also supported technical assistance for national curriculum reform and supported capacity development of Ministry of Education's curriculum experts to undertake the reform process.

In one of her most impactful projects, Kosumo leveraged her experience in the Excel Visual Basic application to create vendor forms that facilitated the distribution of 448,430 exercise books to 178 primary schools across Ethiopia. These books benefitted 89,686 (of whom 33,171 were female) children affected by an acute watery diarrhoea epidemic in the Amhara region.

Of her experience, Kosumo said she has developed her own skills and capacities in reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation in education for development outcomes. In working with national education stakeholders, UNICEF colleagues and officers from other international organizations, Kosumo has furthered her understanding of how education sector plans and political commitments from the national to local level are made, and how donors can support planning and encourage local actors.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor and my colleague of the Education Sector Planning and Management unit for their excellent guidance and support," Kosumo said. "My heartfelt appreciation goes to my colleagues at UNICEF and other organizations related to my assignment and the persons in charge at UNV, the

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Japan in Ethiopia and HPC who helped me in my assignment. Without all this precious support, encouragement and dedication to assist me, my work and life in Ethiopia would not have been fruitful."

*Kosumo's assignment contributed to SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*

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[Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development](#)  
[Multiple research studies have evidenced the importance of early learning. See UNICEF's research website for more details.](#)

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**Sustainable Development Goal:** [SDG 4: Quality education](#), [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

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