EthicalCoach:

YEAR TWO OF THE COACH JOURNEY

Stories from the Ethiopia Pilot Project
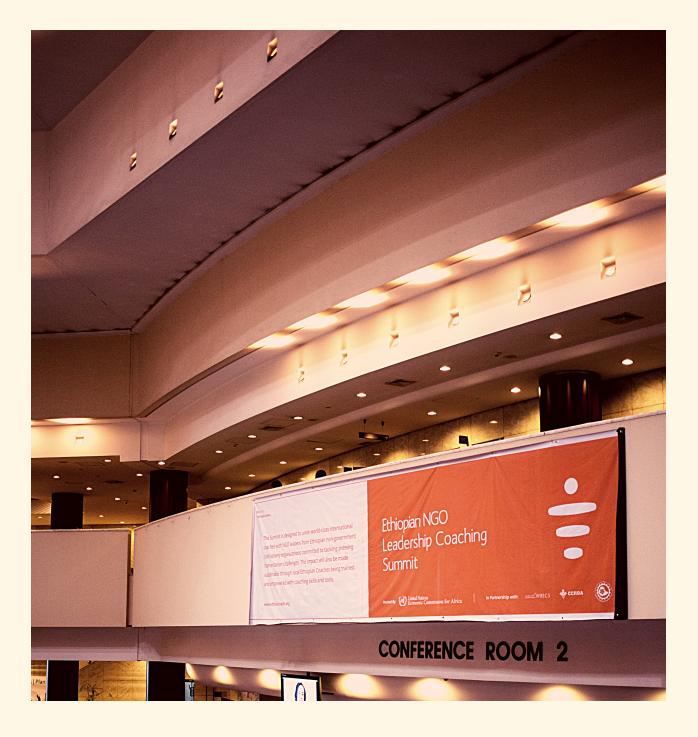

EthicalCoach

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BRIEF SUMMARY

The Ethiopia Project is the pilot program of EthicalCoach. Our vision is to have coaches and leaders together create a world free of poverty and inequality. A more detailed description of the Ethiopia Project can be found in the **2020 Bi-Annual Report**.

During a year of great uncertainty with the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest looming in the country, the Year 2 Cohort of the Ethiopia Project required tremendous flexibility, courage, and commitment from the coaches, team leaders, and participants. Year 2 built off of the successful pilot project coaching leaders and teams from 10 selected NGOs, an NGO Leadership Summit attended by some 400 leaders in Addis Ababa in October 2018, and the completion of the first cohort with 10 selected NGOs.

Taking the learnings from the pilot cohort, the second cohort followed a similar approach with two coaches, one of whom was located in country, for individual coaching for each NGO leader plus team coaching.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change underpinning Leadership Coaching of NGO leaders is that by raising awareness of individual and team behavior and providing the teams with tools will increase effectiveness, performance, and impact the communities they engage.

YEAR 1 KEY FINDINGS

The **Year One Impact Report** outlines key impact areas from the first cohort. The key findings from surveys, interviews, and case studies included observed and reported increases in individual and teams' capacity to:

- Think critically and make decisions;
- Deal effectively with change;
- Give and receive feedback;
- Create an innovative office culture;
- Deal with conflict; and
- Understand and clarify roles and responsibilities.

YEAR 2 KEY FINDINGS

From interviews with the NGO team leaders and their coaches, the key findings included a sense of greater trust and confidence of the team to work more productively and creatively together. The acknowledgement of becoming a high-performing team extended to recognition from others within and outside the NGO. The observed and reported themes also include greater willingness and capacity for:

TRUST

- Psychological safety;
- Transparency;
- Sense of team spirit and unity;
- Connection, support; and genuine relationships

AWARENESS

- Self- and team-reflection;
- Time management;
- Boundary setting;
- Stress management;
- Engagement and motivation

COMMUNICATION

- Interpersonal/team quality of communication;
- Openness and vulnerability

ALIGNMENT

- Clarity of purpose and shared vision;
- Commitment towards goals

GROWTH MINDSET

- Curiosity and positive outlook;
- Challenging of assumptions;
- Proactive feedback solicitation;
- Reframing of challenges to learning opportunities

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Sense of empowerment;
- Ownership and responsibility;
- Collective responsibility for writing winning proposals;
- Focus and recentering of community needs

—— CASE STUDIES

Interviews with the NGO team lead and the co-coaches informed the following four case studies:

Case Study	NGO	Team Lead	Coach
#1: Relationships & Resilience	EngenderHealth	Jemal Kassaw Mohammed, Executive Director/Country Manager	Marilyn O'Hearne and Leah Dejenu
#2: Trust & Transparency	The Hunger Project	Teshome Shibru, Country Director	Marina McGoldrick and Fouzia Muhsin
#3: Confidence & Connection	International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)	Hari Desta, Head of Programs	Nobantu Mpotulo and Yared Abera
#4: Progress & Participation	People in Need	Meron Wubishet Mekonnen, Head of Development Programmes	Osama Al-Mosar and Bekri Ahmedin

Each one highlights:

- **Insights:** the shifts that took place over the course of the coaching journey
- **Issues:** context
- **Implementation:** highlights of coaching engagement
- **Impact:** individual, team, organization, and communication

Case Study #1: EngenderHealth

Relationships & Resilience

NGO Team Lead: Jemal Kassaw Mohammed, Executive Director/Country Manager
Co-Coaches: Marilyn O'Heearne & Leah Dejenu
Team coaching sessions: 10
1:1 Team Lead sessions:3

● INSIGHTS

Global pandemic and civil war

>
- Flexibility in scheduling coaching sessions
- Honoring of participants' boundaries

Expectations of training

>
- Self-accountability check-ins
- Reminders and coaching re-contracting

Lack of team identity

>
- Increase the trust in each other
- Increase in motivation
- Adoption of high performing team characteristics

Confusion of roles and responsibilities

>
- Self-reflection of roles, responsibilities, strengths
- Development of team charter
- Increase in accountability

Uncertainty around organizational changes

>
- Greater resilience
- Clearer understanding of shared purpose

Cultural expectations of harmony over honesty

>
- More effective boundary setting
- Positive & constructive feedback
- Openness to vulnerability

Stigma around self-improvement

>
- Co-coaching pair as positive role models
- Local coach for cultural norms
- Facilitation of pre-assessment exercise

● ISSUES

In spite of the global pandemic, unstable internet and political unrest, the team and their coaches were committed to meet and completed 10 team coaching sessions. The one-on-one sessions with the team leader started much later and as a consequence there were less individual coaching sessions.

With uncertainty as a steady presence, EngenderHealth had been facing a challenging time with business development and identifying and securing a diversity of funding sources. At first, the team wasn't engaged or optimistic about the process. Much of this was due to the unique methodology and process of the coaching experience, as the team was used to traditional training where they were the receivers of information.

"It's not like a spoon-feeding process, it's more a self-reflective process in recognizing own strengths and building on those...it's helped people recognize that we have a lot within ourselves and the expertise that we have accumulated and how much we have within ourselves that we can build on. That is special."

-Jemal Kassaw Mohammed,
Executive Director/Country Manager

After the first few sessions, the team recognized that coaching was not a passive experience, but an opportunity for each person to identify for themselves areas to work on as a teammate and individual.

● IMPLEMENTATION

Having two coaches was an important part of the design of the coaching journey: a very experienced international coach teamed up with a local coach who could serve as a cultural interpreter and occasionally translate concepts in the local language. Due to the pandemic even the local coach ended up participating remotely.

Initially, the team sessions were focused on helping the most senior managers reflect on their goals and identify areas for growth and improvement. Soon, Jemal realized that adding more junior managers, those with potential, would benefit all. This addition of team members made the EngenderHealth team one of the biggest which posed some challenging for the coaches: aside from getting 8-12 people in on the call, the levels of experience and knowledge were uneven. However, everyone agreed that this development opportunity for the junior members of the team was worth the extra effort.

Because the coaches had worked together in the previous cohort, they were able to model what positive feedback and trust looked like in action. because the team had expected a training, there was initial hesitance. The coaches helped the team members to clarify what coaching was all about and provide a structured approach to the coaching process. This included a focus for each session and placing the responsibility for action and reflection on the team

The coaches did a pre- and post-assessment to track changes in both individual and team capacities. The pre-assessment discussions were instrumental to having participants start to open up and build trust. Before the start of each session, the coaches guided a self-accountability check-in. Three to four months is not an unusual timeframe to create a climate of trust for people to share, especially in a virtual environment.

With the threat of political violence, power outages and the ongoing pandemic, flexibility was a key. The coaches and team decided to make up for the missed sessions by meeting twice a month whenever possible, completing 10 team sessions after all.

● IMPACT
INDIVIDUAL

Jemal and the co-coaches were deeply impressed with the commitment to growth each individual had, attending meetings even outside of regular working hours and during times of great upheaval.

The transformation on the individual level to express genuine feelings and personal stories was a notable shift from more accepted cultural norms where openness and vulnerability are less common. In a culture that highly values harmony, the increased willingness of individuals to express less comfortable feelings of disagreement or displeasure with honesty had a tremendous impact on the trust built had a big impact and allowed for the creation of a safe environment.

"In Ethiopian society, people do struggle with being open and honest about their genuine feelings or expressing themselves, but the further along we got into the program, everyone felt comfortable and open and vulnerable enough to share their personal stories or contribute, or when they were giving each other feedback...everyone was so willing and receptive."

-Leah Dejenu, Coach

In a culture in which saying no can be seen as rude, the team learned to honor each other's boundaries and say no. For example, rather than carry on with the burden of a potential increasing political unrest, the participants came together to express that the timing wasn't right. This example was indicative not only of their dedication to each other, the coaches, and the process, but also of their willingness to be honest about boundaries.

Jemal observed the managers felt more empowered and confidence in their competencies to take on additional responsibilities.

TEAM

Over time the team began to adapt characteristics of high functioning teams, trust and feedback in particular. The periodic assessments revealed that people were becoming more aware, more trusting and more skillful in giving both constructive and negative feedback, something not commonly accepted as appropriate in the Ethiopian culture, as explained by the local coach.

As the coaching journey progressed, the coaches noted that the increased trust led team members to be more curious, to experiment with new behaviors, such as asking for feedback about their strengths, exploring their roles and responsibilities, expressing diverging opinions and appreciating their colleagues' contributions.

"We have changed as a team a lot in terms of our capacity, our motivation, our commitment, in terms of taking on additional responsibility."

-Jemal Kassaw Mohammed, Executive Director/Country Manager

In addition, team members started to take responsibility for their actions and commitments, take on stretch assignments and manage their time better. Before the coaching started the team members operated on automatic pilot, not reflecting much about what, how and why they were doing what they were doing (or not doing). Over time the team gained clarity on their purpose and how each member's experience and knowledge contributed to that purpose. The coaches noticed that the team's resilience had increased as a result - an important asset giving the difficult context in which they had to operate.

The creation of a team charter was an important activity. They knew about the organizational charter but had not considered one for their team. They used imagery and metaphors to articulate their roles. The team charter helped the team to celebrate their strengths, challenge and clarify their roles and responsibilities.

"The improvement we saw out of the assessment...the team's attitude towards, whether it's providing feedback or raising a problem working towards improving the work environment, how a shift not only in the environment but even in their action steps towards those key areas."

"Right now, the organization is dealing with some changes. These sessions and these tools helped them acquire the right tools and have these challenging conversations, and also make everyone feel valued. Everyone felt valued in comparison to before."

- Leah Dejenu, Coach

ORGANIZATION

"They do realize they do bring something to the table, and when you hear that from your colleagues and management and staff, that's nice, like receiving a pat on the back"

\- Leah Dejenu, Coach

"From headquarters, increased recognition of our team capacity."

-Jemal Kassaw Mohammed, Executive Director/Country Manager

The return on coaching is difficult to calculate. Still, Jemal noted some concrete accomplishments that he attributed to the coaching: increased diversity of funding sources and greater visibility within the Engenderhealth worldwide. The latter was a morale booster that empowered and inspired the team.

Jemal observed that the process gave an additional platform for the team's visibility across the organization, especially with nurturing the talent of new managers to showcase their expertise and credibility. In turn, this increased a sense of belongingness and commitment to the organization and has a greater positive impact on the communities they serve.

The coaching process didn't just end after the engagement was completed. While Jemal had always taken an interest in informally guiding this staff, he now is leveraging the skills from the engagement to coach his own staff more formally. Coaching is something that Jemal sees as cascading throughout the organization.

COMMUNITY

The team's greater sense of clarity of their roles lent itself to greater clarity of the role they played in the organizational vision and mission, and to better navigate the uncertainties and changes with greater resilience and adaptability. These tools and techniques are beneficial not only to the organization, but to the NGO landscape and communities beyond.

Additionally, the commitment and buy-in to the power of coaching has the power to dismantle the existing stigma around mental health that any form of self-improvement is a negative. The co-coaches and teams found that the process of introducing self-awareness and the importance of trust creates a unique safe space to de-stigmatize self-improvement.

"They are better situated to handle difficult situations and challenging scenarios that they shared with us, especially dealing with organizational change...they will take these tools and apply them [wherever they go]."

-Leah Dejenu, Coach

"We are more engaged in managing individual projects and individual organizational functions, so this process, the more we know each other, the more we reflect, the more we empower – [our] engagement in business development has increased."

-Jemal Kassaw Mohammed, Executive Director/Country Manager

Trust & Transparency

NGO Team Lead: Teshome Shibru, Country Director
Co-Coaches: Marina McGoldrick and Fouzia Muhsin
Team coaching sessions: 5

● INSIGHTS

New team with new leader

> • Delegation of responsibilities through COVID illness
> • Increased confidence in team
> • Leader focused more on strategy than operations

Reactive team lacking trust and cohesion

> • Increased trust
> • Suspension of judgement
> • More accountability
> • Greater engagement and support
> • Appreciation of differences as strengths

Underrecognized team members with deficit mindset

> • Heightened confidence in abilities
> • Empowerment to vocalize concerns and opinions
> • Self-reflection to rediscover true potential

Low sense of self as a team with underrated reputation outside of team

> • Acknowledgement and pride in team knowledge
> • Recognition of team's expertise
> • Improved quality of internal and external comm.

Financial challenges

> • Three winning proposals

● ISSUES

Teshome leads an NGO that empowers people by providing microfinance opportunities to organize and build resilient communities, create green economies to mitigate climate change, and restore forests through tree planting. Although its mission was clear, how to realize it in the context of the pandemic and the political tensions was not.

"Trust deficit very much affected us"

-Teshome Shibru, Country Director

Teshome inherited a team from his predecessor that was not very strong. Although its members were individually competent, as a team it was plagued by a lack of trust, frequent misunderstandings, unexamined assumptions and a tendency to judge each other. In addition, the team had not been very successful in attracting additional funding.

● IMPLEMENTATION

> *"People may not consider coaching as something serious unless they experience it…. The technique is simplicity."*
>
> -Teshome Shibru, Country Director

The coaches helped the team members to reflect on their behavior as individuals and as a team. They modeled how to ask good questions and reflect on what was happening. They stepped back to empower the team to discover the power of the coaching process and make it their own.

● IMPACT
INDIVIDUAL

Teshome noted that the coaching process helped the team to shift out of their deficit mindset and recognize the gifts and contributions they were, together, bringing to the table.

The team was not used to examine its practices of working together. Besides, the pace of work was fast. As a result they were not used to taking a closer look at their individual and collective contributions. The coaching process allowed them to do this. Doing so required the co-coaches to facilitate a process for reflection on their own contributions

> *"Coaching is like rediscovering our true potential."*
>
> *"We need someone who will [let us stop] for some time to reflect on what we are doing."*
>
> -Teshome Shibru, Country Director

The coaching opened up communication between the members. They started to encourage each other to share their contributions openly, even those who had been timid before to speak out, and vocalize their needs.

Teshome started to use his empathy and humility to lead with wisdom. He became more trusting of his team and more willing to delegate. When Teshome was diagnosed with COVID-19, his team was able to step up to the plate and support one another. This would have been unimaginable before when he would have been unable to let go. As a result, when he returned to work, he was able to step back from day-to-day operations and focus on strategy. Teshome also noted that the positive effect of coaching spilled over into his personal life

TEAM

Before the coaching, the team members had not been able to see how their different strengths got in the way of working effectively together. The team coaching helped them to see their interdependencies and see their individual strengths not as a limiting factor but rather as benefitting their collective success. The coaches noted an increase in self confidence and a desire to support one another to achieve their shared goal.

The co-coaches noted that there was an increase in self-confidence and desire to support each other to achieve a shared goal.

> *"As a team, the impact they have said is that supporting each other has increased, communication has also improved, and trust among each other is developing, and consciously driven by common purpose and goal."*
>
> -Fouzia Muhsin, Coach

> *"We've talked about things we've never talked about before...such as the impact their interactions have on their relationships."*
>
> -Marina McGoldrick, Coach

Teshome observed that trust and transparency among team members increased. They were bringing a lens of curiosity to their interactions, no longer reactive in the moment. They started to reduce their judgments (of this is good, that is bad). Instead they started to pause and reflect, motivating each other to do this more and more.

The team members started to see the benefit of asking questions and be more supportive of each other. This in turn affected their willingness to take responsibility for their actions and ownership of their processes and work.

The co-coaches noted the improvement of communication within the team. This included individuals collaborating on a proposal who had never done that before.

> *"You can see the change from when we started...a lot of changes, we are more transparent, we are open to each other, we are building trust...we are now more committed a team, more cohesive, we understand more each other, we understand and support each other...we are happier...people like to come together."*
>
> - Teshome Shibru, Country Director

ORGANIZATION

The co-coaches noted that the team had previously been "working with the brakes on," letting humility hide the impact and skill the team has in microfinance. Despite their expertise and innovation in the field, their lack of strong communication beyond their team kept them under the radar and not having as broad an impact as they could on other teams and organizations. Teshome has already noted improvements with communication with global colleagues. While there is still opportunity here to increase their visibility, the coaching journey has given them more awareness of the depth of their expertise and need to communicate this to other partners.

"When you are at peace with yourself internally, you are also succeeding in dealing with your partners. A happy team, you also bring happiness to others you interact with."

- Teshome Shibru, Country Director

COMMUNITY

With a lot of pressure to finish proposals, there isn't always a lot of time or space for reflection. Teshone noted that the results and success are clear for the team and organization. One key piece of evidence was three winning proposals from three different donors. Their new skills in working together, grounded in transparency and trust, allowed them to work collaboratively on new proposals that showed a more nuanced understanding of the communities they served. Not only did the quality and depth of their proposals improve, Teshome also expected that the implementation of existing projects would also improve as a result. As a logical follow-up to a more empowered and effective team successfully winning higher quality and thoughtful proposals that meet community needs with greater awareness and nuance, Teshome and his team anticipate the implementation of the projects to also be of a higher quality.

"Being empathetic, how you can win wins the hearts and minds of people by being empathetic, wiser [e.g. when I go to bed] I usually think of others."

-Teshome Shibru, Country Director

As a leader, Teshome reflected on his growth as a leader with empathy. Of course, leading with such an orientation not only impacts the team, but also the organization and the communities they serve.
With his role as the leader who believes in the simplicity and power of coaching for all, Teshone is a great ambassador for embedding coaching into the NGO culture.

Case Study #3: International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)

Confidence & Connection

NGO Team Lead: Hari Desta, Head of Programs
Co-Coaches: Nobantu Mpotulo and Yared Abera
Team coaching sessions: 14
1:1 Team Lead sessions: 4

● INSIGHTS

Disengagement & lack of efficiency working from home amid global pandemic
>
- Team integration
- Above and beyond commitment to job duties
- Increased engagement
- Deeper personal connection
- Frequent check-ins
- Increased active listening

Challenges as roadblocks
>
- Embracing challenges as energizers
- Clearer vision for future
- Refocused strategy
- Expanded scope of projects

Skepticism about the coaching process
>
- Ownership of the coaching journey
- Enhanced responsibility of individual effort to team

Lack of team trust, connection, and communication
>
- Increased support for each other
- Accountability for own role and responsibility
- Awareness of strengths, skills and hopes
- Openness and vulnerability
- Deep trust
- Vibrant communication

Limited financial resources and IOCC portfolio
>
- More proposals submitted
- More concept papers submitted to donors
- Funding procurement

Reliance on status quo and deference to restrictions
>
- Openness to learn new things as team
- Solicitation of feedback
- Active seeking of opinions and inputs from the field
- Growth mindset
- Strengths-based approach to competencies

● ISSUES

Hari's goals for the team fit under two broad categories: 1) boosting performance; and 2) mobilizing resources. She always had to remind people to take responsibility for their work, which often slowed the project set-up process down. Additionally, the IOCC portfolio was limited and despite their solid performance, Hari questioned whether they could do more. At first, the team members expected that the coaching would be like a traditional training where they would be told how to deal with their challenges.

● IMPLEMENTATION

Hari expanded the initial senior management team to include two field coordinators. This made the conversations more dynamic and inclusive. The coaches successfully facilitated the conversations between the different (hierarchical) levels to foster trust and a sense of togetherness. The ease and strong communication between the coaches role-modeled collaboration for the team.

The coaches responded to the team's expectation of getting trained by using a questionnaire and then establishing a safe space for dialogue. For example, during a discussion about interpersonal chemistry, the team members were very quiet at first and then started to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions more freely. The local coach's cultural understanding helped the group feel safe.

The coaches modeled the practice of norm setting at the beginning of each session, and a reflection at the end about how people felt about the session. The coaches' use of a strength-based approach and appreciative inquiry. This helped the team members recognize their competencies and strengths, including those they had not used. Over time this led to a shift away from a deficit-based approach to life and work.

Sometimes, when the internet was unstable and the international coach could not join the session, the local coach conducted the session in the local language which improved the depth and quality of the conversations.

● IMPACT
INDIVIDUAL

The impact of the pandemic, which required working from home, and the political unrest left many team members feeling discouraged and with low energy which negatively affected performance. Hari noted that the coaching re-energized the team; they became more engaged and started to look forward to the next session. Once they understood what coaching was all about they took ownership of the process. They went above and beyond what was in their job descriptions and attended sessions outside normal office hours and even dialing in from remote areas.

"During the first three months [of the lockdown] we were very stressed…. We are now also checking in on how our families are doing – we are concerned – we are listening. We talk about what we do on the side [outside work] and what activities we engage in."

"They started seeing things inside themselves they didn't realize…. Not about problem solving but getting the best out of what was there."

-Hari Desta, Head of Programs

The coaches' approach helped to open up new areas of individual growth. People wanted to contribute and this was contagious and others followed suit. They started to learn together and see opportunities for growth they had not seen clearly before.

From the onset with the team exercise, the co-coaches led a process whereby participants felt almost immediately safe to share and open up in ways they had not done so before. She also noted a shift in their positive outlook to getting energized with the challenges.

"They started seeing things inside themselves they didn't realize…. Not about problem solving but getting the best out of what was there."

-Nobantu Mpotulo, Coach

Hari's own growth as a leader showed up in various ways: her relationship with her own supervisor improved. She no longer needed to take center stage and made space for others to step in and contribute, find their voices and speak up. Her team members took ownership of the collective tasks. The inclusion of field coordinators showed that everyone mattered.

TEAM

In a tough situation where team members were working from home, Hari noted a real shift in how the team came together.

Although Hari could not observe the impact of the coaching on her team members' direct report, she did notice that the work climate had become more positive; people worked better together and performance improved. There was a sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability as the members of her team embraced challenges and worked together to tackle them. This team, that had previously struggled with communication, was now actively engaging with each other; there was a vibrancy to the way they worked together. They solicited each others' input and opinions and were less afraid to give feedback and welcomed opportunities to grow.

All this led the team to become more efficient and effective. They submitted more proposals and more concept papers to donors than they had before. The project set-up time, from creating relationships with stakeholders to taking ownership of submitting documents ahead of time without being asked, meant that they could get to implementation faster. This of course impacted the quality of their work and willingness to give each other honest feedback to improve the process and product.

"Now people are more engaged, the quality of our work has improved…. We talk more with each other. I am learning to give assignments, more back and forth, and give feedback in a way that enhances the quality of our work."

"The coaching sessions are bringing us more confidence, we interact more, discuss more to reason out/explore. Living through the pandemic would have been more difficult without the coaching. We see some other organizations where the energy of the staff is …. The increased confidence and methodologies we learned allow us to be more productive, we work hard, we deliver quality work."

-Hari Desta, Head of Programs

Moreover, with the increased confidence and trust, the team felt encouraged and empowered to explore opportunities beyond their current scope. The coaching process had introduced a positive feedback loop: as people increased their confidence and trust in themselves and each other, they took ownership and accountability of their actions, and expanded what they could do (together and individually). The feedback, support and encouragement they received from each other reinforced their commitment to the goals of the organization.

"There was that love…we really gelled together… lots of trust – wasn't there at the beginning…. You could feel in a way the collapsing of hierarchy. It was like everyone was working on the same page. It was more like a relational team that is so clear about where they were going and what they wanted to do. And somehow people looked more even more energetic."

-Nobantu Mpotulo, Coach

ORGANIZATION

Prior to coaching the team had felt constrained because the areas they wanted to expand into had no funding.

As the team started to gel, Hari observed that people started to talk about a more expansive vision for the future. As they discussed how to realize their aspirations they started to make connections with other sectors for input on how to make their business case. IOCC's headquarters supported them in this endeavor and they incorporated their aspirations into their 20/21 plan. In doing so, the team had taken the lead in exploring possibilities and possible funding beyond their current scope. They worked successfully with the government of Ethiopia to eradicate a debilitating and neglected disease.

COMMUNITY

While it is a bit too early to fully gauge the impact on the community, the team's energy around the organization's vision also led to open discussions about their aspirations for the community. By the end of the coaching, IOCC/Ethiopia had added three programs to their portfolio: livelihood, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Emergency Response.

This success increased staff motivation, which in turn increased the confidence that the communities had in the team. Even though visiting communities is impossible right now, the team is in the process of getting community perspective feedback.

Progress & Participation

NGO Team Lead: Meron Wubishet Mekonnen, Head of Development Programmes
Co-Coaches: Bekri Ahmedin & Osama Al-Mosar
Team coaching sessions: 6
1:1 Team Lead sessions: 8

● INSIGHTS

Uncertainty about coaching process & expectations of training

>

- Powerful questioning
- Reflection & challenge of team behaviors

Young team without a lot of team norms

>

- Increased accountability
- Willingness to challenge each other
- Team spirit

Change and uncertainty

>

- Flexibility of content session by session
- Increased positive outlook

Lack of trust and communication

>

- Enhanced trust
- More inter- and intra-communication
- WhatsApp group to sustain connection

● ISSUES

COVID and political instability in Ethiopia made the coaching challenging with a lot of ups and downs. Team engagement at the start of the process took some time to gain momentum, as many did not know what to expect with coaching.

Meron was leading a young team that didn't have a lot of shared norms around team behaviors. There were also initial doubts about what the coaching entailed with uncertainty about the process and what each participant's own roles would be. There was an expectation that the sessions would be more standard training.

● IMPLEMENTATION

In order to help the team members understand how coaching was different from training, the coaches paid much attention to the contracting process. They helped the team to come up with a coaching agreement which was then revisited at each following session. This repeated contracting helped the team to take ownership of the coaching process and become accountable to each other.

"We are responsible for the process not the outcome...the team holds that accountability"
-Osama Al-Mosar, Coach

The coaches modeled asking good questions and creating a space for the team members to reflect. They also created a space that was psychologically safe in which it was OK to challenge the team's behaviors that impeded high performance.

The co-coaches coordinated well with clear roles. While one set out the highlights and framework for each session, the other then led the discussion. One coach would contribute or ask probing questions or feedback as necessary throughout the session, leading the self-reflection pieces, while the other focus on the closing and takeaways. This seamless co-facilitating left the team feeling like they were in safe hands. The co-coaches also created a WhatsApp group to keep the lines of communication open in between sessions.

● IMPACT
INDIVIDUAL

The initial misunderstanding about coaching did not last long. The willingness to fully engage increased with each session. Over time the coaches notes excitement about coming to the session which manifested itself in people signing on before the agreed upon starting time so that they could chat with each other.

As psychological safety increased, the team members showed a willingness to be vulnerable with themselves and each other. They became more self aware and aware of others. This allowed them to see their own and each others' contributions and deepen their connections in ways unheard of before.

"When they open, they challenge each other; they really express their feelings, their disappointments, their values, their desires. Definitely they understand their gaps and their strengths, and we identified their areas of development."

-Bekri Ahmedin, Coach

Meron noted that team members found there was greater willingness to challenge each other more and hold each other accountable. They also gained greater appreciation and recognition of each other's unique strengths and contributions.

TEAM

In addition to improving their capacity to reflect as individuals, they also did as a team.

"They're more organized doing it, meaning the sense of engagement and involvement is increasing. There were also [evidence] of them opening up. The level of sharing information around the team dynamics...they are sharing things they never shared."

-Osama Al-Mosar, Coach

Meron found the most surprising thing was the development of trust and team spirit. As a young team, they had a great opportunity to learn, and throughout the coaching process, they immediately started to integrate their learnings. Among these helpful team behaviors included improving accountability, problem sharing and healthy challenge.

The improved lines of communication, including the WhatsApp group, helped not only to improve connection between existing team members, but also helped onboard to new ones

ORGANIZATION

While it is still a bit too early to gauge the fuller impact on the organization, Meron already has seen a difference in the team's interaction with the wider organization and expects this to continue over the next several months. The co-coaches also noted that the team's broader impact was shifting to a high level in an organic way.

"We learn along the way we move."

~Osama Al-Mosar, Coach

COMMUNITY

Meron recognizes that there needs to be more time to see the fuller impact on communities. That said, Meron notes that the team's approach to issues is changing, and the changes will have a positive impact on the communities they serve in due time.

CONTACT US

EthicalCoach

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ETHIOPIA YEAR 2 STORIES