



Year One of the Coaching Journey

Stories from the Ethiopia Pilot Project

August 2020

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Introduction

As part of the evaluation of the Year 1 Ethiopian coaching pilot, we wanted to hear from coaches and NGO Leaders about their journey and its benefits. A more complete assessment of the Year 1 pilot can be found in the [Impact Report](#) and for more context about EthicalCoach and the overall Ethiopian project, please access the [Bi-Annual Report](#), August 1, 2018-July 31, 2020.

Methodology

The Story Telling Team wove these vignettes together from materials gathered over the past six to eight months from the six NGOs that received both team and individual leader coaching during the period January, 2019 to February, 2020. Sources include:

- Notes taken during the February 21 celebration event where teams from the Year 1 pilot received certificates and shared their experiences with teams from the Year 2 cohort
- Interview notes and recordings made by Sebastian Fox and Jane Cooke-Lauder as part of the data gathering for a book chapter on team coaching to be published in 2021
- Comments shared by the coaches during EthicalCoach team meetings.

Drafts of the stories were shared with the NGO leaders and coaches for comment and were then finalized. This exercise will be repeated with the Year 2 coaching recipients.

Common Threads

These stories are optimistic and focus on the value derived from the coaching. At the same time, they reflect the commitment and hard work from all involved in order for the coaching to have been successful. The stories are diverse, reflecting the individual contexts of each NGO as well as the needs and challenges of their leaders. What is consistent was the ability of the coaches to respond to this diversity to design and deliver experiences tailored to each leader and leadership team. Simple tools were used, many of which were then adopted by the leaders and used within their own teams and across the organization. This combination of expertise from coaches resident outside Ethiopia, combined with the cultural awareness and presence of the local coach, enabled key breakthroughs.

Patterns of improvement can be seen across all these case studies: growth in self-awareness, the value of reflection, the importance of building relationships and having courageous conversations are omnipresent, as is the enhanced ability of senior leaders working together in a more integrated, strategic and cohesive

manner. A number of leaders commented on the importance of these qualities in creating a more efficient and effective organization that is able to deliver additional support or support in different ways to the community.



How Coaching Helped Imagine1Day Increase Water, Hygiene and Sanitation for Ethiopian Students.

Listening to Dr. Seid Aman describe the effects a year-long coaching program had on his team, it's evident something extraordinary took place. It is the energy and sincerity with which the Country Director at Imagine1Day explains his team's results that is really striking as he recounts how the EthicalCoach program "totally enhanced our leadership capacity, and that means our capacity to serve others as well, the people we work with, our colleagues who report to us, or

work we do with government partners and communities." For Seid and his team, an example of this increased capacity was a growth in vital funding: Historically, grants have been written by the Country Director. Following the coaching, Imagine1Day was successful with the first grant application developed by the team. This provided an additional estimated \$400,000 for critical resources such as water, hygiene and sanitation supplies for 69 schools across Ethiopia.

The Path to Progress

Progress was not straightforward for the NGO leader and his team. The year-long journey was a winding road of learning and self-discovery. So how exactly did coaching translate into increased fundraising?

For Seid himself, it was a fundamental shift in awareness about how he empowered his team. For the team, it was the ability to speak openly and, at times, challenge their leader's views. Peter Senge, the author of *The Fifth Discipline*, a seminal book on learning organizations, maintains that:

"team learning is the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire."

This kind of team learning was a key goal for Seid and his team. While the team was already close-knit, they had a strong desire to do more together. That, in turn, translated into the team's ability to expand the resources available to deliver on its mission. Seid attributes these achievements to the insights gained through team and individual coaching provided by international coach, Katherine Holt, and local coach, Matthew Broderick.

Team Shifts

During the program, Katherine and Matthew built strong relationships with the NGO leader and his team, collaborating extensively to understand the team's aspirations and desires. The coaches observed that while there was open communication, the team did not readily challenge each other's perspectives - a critical factor to team learning. Katherine and Matthew designed safe spaces for the team, allowing them to be open, vulnerable, and offer divergent views through an exercise called the Devil's Advocate that helps solicit alternative perspectives. Katherine and Matthew also shared tools like the G.R.O.W. model and 'the empty chair'. Seid observed that the coaches were "encouraging us to come up with solutions within our context." The team was learning to take the broader system into account when making decisions.

Leader Shifts

In one-on-one sessions with Katherine, Seid experienced deep personal insights. In an open discussion with her, he recognized that his strength as an initiator and thought-leader was also, at times, hindering contributions from the team. "You know, that is a big lesson for me," Seid admitted. As a result, he resolved to pause, listen more and allow others to start discussions before adding his view. It did not take long before he noticed a difference in the team's interactions. Seid adds, "Though we were very much a connected team, I think [the coaching program] further enhanced our connection, especially as a senior management team."

A Lasting Impact

The EthicalCoach program left an indelible mark on the NGO leader and his relationship with the team. Insights from the coaching program helped him see that sharing leadership responsibilities was a key enabler to increasing his team's capacity. Seid says the EthicalCoach program "Helped me to focus on more strategic things. It gave me the means to develop people. For me, that is a huge impact. And I wasn't doing that before because I didn't think that they had that capacity. But now they need a little support from me and, in the coming years, they may not need any support from me, which means we have increased

our capacity in a number of areas, including the critical arena of fundraising."

Seid plans to leverage this experience to develop future team members. The country leader said,

“*I now know how to coach people - especially when you have someone junior - to develop their capacity.*”

For the team, they have deepened their connection by learning how to have open and honest dialogues, including challenging one another's assumptions in a constructive manner. As Peter Senge points out, "Team learning starts with dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'". The effective application of these insights is already serving Seid and his team well as they continue to amplify the mission of Imagine1Day: to ensure every child in Ethiopia receives an education.



From Good to Great: the iDE Leadership Team Story

Andrea Hernandez Tobar was the relatively new Country Managing Partner at iDE (International Development Enterprises) when she received her invitation to the Ethiopian NGO Leadership Coaching Summit. Andrea knew the Executive at iDE was very supportive of leadership coaching, so she was eager for herself and her team to benefit from what turned out to be two amazing days of world-class learning and sharing.

At the Summit, the iDE delegates were introduced to their international coach, Veronica Wantenaar, and local coach, Fouzia Muhsin. Andrea was by now even more convinced the coaching program could help her team build on the successes they'd achieved to-date with economically empowering women, promoting gender equality and securing the food supply.

The Path to Progress

iDE Ethiopia's senior management team was already very capable. They were well educated, technically proficient and highly competent in their roles. However, Veronica noted early on that - as a team - "They were not working effectively together... They were in their own silos, were not connected and found it difficult to have honest conversations." However, she also saw they were open to learning, to growth and to exploring where change was needed.

To build trust, the coaching team decided to lead by example. They explored and deepened their own co-coach relationship, building mutual trust and understanding. This enabled them to demonstrate their genuine enthusiasm, respect and appreciation for one another as they worked alongside the iDE team. They were also continually re-contracting with each other, planning team sessions in advance and reviewing the outcomes of each session as part of their philosophy of continuous improvement.

The coaches introduced new concepts and tools in response to the needs and challenges the iDE team identified as the program progressed. Check-ins, breathing exercises, thoughtful questioning activities and advanced planning were just some of the elements the team adopted. Contingency planning was also

an important practical consideration: the session design had to accommodate the reality that the internet connection with the international coach, Veronica, could drop-out at any time! All the preparation paid off. The commitment of the coaches was reciprocated by the iDE team members who - as busy as they were - showed up consistently to coaching sessions. They welcomed the opportunity to come together, leave the day-to-day stresses outside the meeting room, and engage in deep, meaningful conversations.

The shift in the team's interactions was noticeable and remarkable. Having established the ground rules, the team now had permission to hold real conversations and experience the difference in how they connected.

Fouzia, the local coach, was in the room with the iDE team and - in addition to coaching - acted as a bridge and translator, providing cultural insights for both Veronica and Andrea.

A clear example of the changes in team behaviors was around giving feedback. Initially, providing feedback was "terrifying" and was avoided at iDE, so much so that annual staff reviews had been suspended. A coaching session was dedicated to the topic and enabled the team to make one of their biggest breakthroughs. Not only were the once-feared yearly reviews reinstated, but

there was also a multiplier effect: feedback had proven to be so critical and so helpful to their own performance that the team started teaching the skills to their direct reports enabling them to use the techniques and tools in the field with clients and stakeholders.

Leader Impact

Andrea found that her personal coaching sessions with Veronica drove home

“ the importance of taking time to reflect, to look at areas to improve and to trust the team more. ”

Andrea noticed she grew as the team grew which then helped her with her own commitment levels. Given Veronica also coached the senior team, she was in a unique position to observe and appreciate the dynamics between Andrea and her team and help Andrea identify behavioral patterns. As Andrea commented,

“ Every session with Veronica was meaningful. I learned new tools and frameworks that have truly changed my life. ”

Impact on iDE

2019 presented the iDE team with many major challenges. To Andrea's delight, they were able to deliver their best year ever, despite facing multiple obstacles,

and end the year within budget. Although coaching was by no means the only factor to the team's increasing impact, Andrea commented that,

“ Many of these successes would not have happened without coaching, I'm 100% sure of that. The team ended projects more strongly, was more efficient and had a stronger vision and commitment to the work than ever before. As a result, we were able to help more people. ”

She concluded, “It wasn't a coincidence that all this [additional success] was achieved during our year of coaching with EthicalCoach.”



What Impact Could Coaching Have on an NGO Working With the Most Vulnerable Children in Ethiopia?

EthicalCoach at ORE

Getachew Tesfay, the CEO of Operation Rescue Ethiopia (ORE), didn't have an answer to that question when his organization was selected for the EthicalCoach inaugural coaching program. However, he was sure he wanted to find out! Getachew was attracted to the project after listening to a presentation a few months earlier by Ben Croft, founder of EthicalCoach. With great enthusiasm, Getachew brought some of the community leaders from Mekele with him to the two-day EthicalCoach Summit held at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) building in Addis Ababa in October 2018.

The Journey

The senior team of ORE had received training and attended workshops in the past and had benefited from learning specific practices and interventions. Abadi Tesfay, ORE's COO, described this training as, "A set of do's and don'ts, ... that is directional - they tell you how to do it". But coaching is quite different. One of the team members reflected on the comparison between coaching and traditional training and described it this way: "In other training, two hours of sitting is too long. But not with coaching because the issue is yours. You focus on the idea you raise yourself."

ORE team members soon came to recognize that *they* would be the ones to put forward the issues and solutions during active interactions with the coaching team. With persistent and patient guidance from coaches Katherine Holt and Yonas Tegene, the team began to articulate their challenges and seek answers from within themselves and one another. The coaches introduced tools such as the G.R.O.W. coaching model, Emotional Intelligence training, the 'empty chair' method and simple but effective techniques such as the provocative question "And what else?".

Over the course of the program, the effects were profound. "I and my team are so lucky to be coached by Katherine

and Yonas.", commented Getachew, who added that the G.R.O.W. model was something he was already using to prepare for new projects and meet challenges.

And yet, it was not an easy transition. Coaching was not embraced by everyone on the team at first, but this quickly changed as the coaching program was rolled-out and better understood. One participant admitted that before coaching, "I did not want to ask, or answer, questions and I was scared to do things." Since going through the coaching process, she is now able to initiate action on her own. In her words:

“I can do many things; I am not holding back.”

Another participant recounted her fear of speaking in public and that she now no longer has that fear. Another staff member described her experience this way: "At first it was a little complicated, but it helped push me towards change."

Lasting Impact

The ORE senior team is now a close-knit group, rather like a family unit. They've grown as individuals and worked together in a variety of team exercises where they were encouraged to speak up, challenge one another, and step into the shoes of their teammates. ORE team members now take on more responsibility for

finding answers and solutions themselves and are less reliant on Getachew to give them the answers and direct them. As Getachew said:

“For my team, coaching helps us to think together rather than them coming to me for the answers - a good fellowship to fly together.”

The team believes coaching has helped them in a number of different ways. They are more effective when preparing and executing their growing list of projects, raising community awareness and when collaborating with shareholders and government services. Team members feel they are thriving in their personal lives and that coaching has helped them deal more effectively with people in any situation. Several team members remarked that,

“Coaching has changed my life.”

The experience and the success of the coaching program were best summed up by a team member this way, "The journey was very fruitful. When we started working with EthicalCoach, I had limited knowledge about coaching. After one year, I believe coaching is essential. We cannot lead without coaching: being coached and coaching others."



Embracing the Spirit of Ubuntu: Human-centric Team Coaching

EthicalCoach at JeCCDO

The Jerusalem Children and Community Development Organization (JeCCDO) is an Ethiopian Resident Charity Organization. It promotes the wellbeing of children, youth and families through education, health and sanitation, and agriculture. Like most nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), at the core of this organization is a small but dedicated team working diligently to advance its mission. But, as is typical in many organizations, being highly capable, the core team members worked exclusively within their own areas of expertise. Reflecting on the year-long engagement with the EthicalCoach program, JeCCDO's leader, Mulugeta Gebru, has noticed a significant shift in the team's synergy. Commenting on where the team started their coaching

journey, the NGO leader observed, "the team's relationships have gotten better as they connected and worked together." Mulugeta attributes this change to team coaching. He says that "because of the way the coaches asked questions," his team genuinely connected with one another. The team transformed their interpersonal relationships, and according to Mulugeta, they "learned about a coaching culture and how to coach others."

The Impact of a Coaching Culture

Writing on the topic of coaching cultures, Frederic Funck from the Center for Creative Leadership says that a coaching culture "enables radical transformation by fostering certain types of conversations daily. It creates a climate where people learn how to: (1) Give and receive feedback; (2) Support and stretch someone's thinking; and (3) Challenge people's performance plateau". In other words, a coaching culture fosters an environment where people can experience a balance of challenge and support.

Mulugeta says the challenge and support he received working one-on-one with international coach Nobantu Mpotulo helped him think about concepts that he had not previously considered. She provided tools and frameworks that were

helpful, especially in the area of human resources, where capability building resources were limited. Mulugeta also noted striking interpersonal transformations within the team which he attributes to the work of team coaches, Dumini Magadela and Sara Groenendijk.

So, how did these coaches create such a profound shift?

The Spirit of Ubuntu

In the book, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, Desmond Tutu writes that Ubuntu is challenging to translate into a Western language. But to describe its importance, he says that “a person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good...”.

“Ubuntu recognizes the interconnectedness of all humanity.”

As Tutu explains, Ubuntu’s essence means, “my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.”

Coaches Nobantu and Dumini introduced the concept of Ubuntu at the Ethiopian NGO Leadership Coaching Summit in Addis Ababa, and it was well-received. The coaches carried over the idea of Ubuntu into individual and team coaching. From this integral perspective,

Nobantu worked one-on-one with Mulugeta, and Sara and Dumini designed the coaching alliance with the team.

The Team’s Journey

When the team started team coaching, they were already working well together. However, the group operated singularly, concentrating on specific programs or tasks within their respective areas of responsibility versus working as one collective team. The team set out to learn how to leverage their collective resources. Sara and Dumini helped them adopt varied ways to enhance their effectiveness, equipping them with insight on leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and present-focused approaches - such as Gestalt - to enhance their toolkits. All of this was grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Over time, the learnings began to take root, and the team’s perspective and level of engagement with one another changed. As team member and co-contact person for the coaching sessions, Helina Abraham, recounts:

“Coaching transformed the way they saw each other, not just as colleagues but as people and caring for each other. Not just tasks, but people-orientated ... the team realized the importance of individual and collective responsibility; they now plan

on time, do tasks on time ... people are more open. ”

A contributing factor to the team’s cohesiveness was the presence of a local coach. With Dumitru joining the team virtually, Sara was able to coordinate with the team on the ground, while working in close collaboration with Dumitru. As a result, Helina says, “rapport improved,” a shift also noted by Mulugeta.

Team rapport was not the only change.

“The team learned the critical importance of transparency and accountability.”

Mulugeta noticed that as relationships improved, so did the team’s quality of work. For example, he recognized improvements in how the team strategized, set goals, and followed-through on tasks. Mulugeta recounted,

“ *...they have learned how to review strategy, and how to work through problems.* ”

The team’s analytical, decision-making, and communication prowess exceeded past performance. “They have reviewed their programs to see which are worth following through, and are more realistic about their outcomes, and more intentional in their communications with communities.” And as for Mulugeta,

Nobantu observed a similar change in the NGO leader. Noting the spread of compassionate interaction, he was opening up more, was willing to ask more questions and be more engaging.

Moving Forward: Sustaining a 35-Year Legacy

Mulugeta says what he really enjoyed about the EthicalCoach program is that the coaches didn’t give solutions but enabled team members to work out solutions for themselves through self-empowerment and tapping into their own ingenuity to derive answers. The team can now amplify the coaching approach across the organization. In the spirit of Ubuntu, they recognized their shared humanity which, Helina says, “made them more human and relatable and helped them grow as a team.” Continuing the spirit of Ubuntu, the team has learned how to challenge and support each other. Dumitru and Sara echo Helina’s sentiments. The coaches observed that the way the team now interacts is “more supportive of each other, more integrated, more fun, and people are more productive and motivated.” EthicalCoach has helped team members deepen their understanding and appreciation for one another which, in turn, will help JeCCDO sustain its 35-year legacy of assisting children, youth and families in Ethiopia.



Growing Leaders for Future Success: The Farm Africa Story

Yasmin Abubeker was two years into her role as Country Director of Farm Africa when she received and accepted an invitation to attend the Ethiopian NGO Leadership Coaching Summit hosted by EthicalCoach in Addis Ababa.

There she met the coaches who were to play such a formative role over the next many months in the lives of Farm Africa's senior management team. To her, they were the "Dream Team", strengthening the capabilities of Farm Africa's leaders to do the important work of empowering women across Ethiopia by understanding the challenges they face in a local context and adapting Farm Africa's programs accordingly.

Getting Started

International coach, Marilyn O'Hearne, had the opportunity while in Addis for the Summit to meet with Yasmin at her office. Marilyn describes how her first impression of Yasmin was of this warm and inclusive young leader, and how

delighted she was to be assigned to work alongside her. Coaching of the senior team was the responsibility of co-coaches Nobantu Mpotulo and Yared Abera who embody the notion of appreciation, bringing to their work a strong spirituality and sense of connectivity that had the effect of drawing team members in and allowing everyone to feel heard.

The coaches had quickly established a way of working together. They discussed their respective approaches and agreed there was an alignment that respected boundaries and guaranteed client confidentiality. Regular meetings were scheduled and a WhatsApp group chat enabled open lines of communication.

The Team Experience

Like most leaders in the charitable sector, team members were under pressure to do more with less. Nobantu's insights into working with smaller organizations were invaluable, focusing them on their strengths, on what was working, and what could be learned and leveraged from what was going well. She reminded them of the adage:

"you eat an elephant one bite at a time,"

and that the work that they were getting done was making a difference. Having visited Ethiopia previously, she was tuned-in to the importance of

relationships and of spending time getting to know each other.

To that end, team coaching started with team members providing written information about their goals and priorities. With this background and insights, the coaches focused the first three sessions on team culture, team spirit and leadership style. Each meeting started with a check-in. The coaches were endlessly creative in terms of identifying ways to raise the team's energy. A code of conduct was established, an agreement as to what was brought to the meeting and the confidentiality of what was disclosed. Team members learned to celebrate more, to identify successes, and to feel excited about introducing new ideas and projects.

However, team coaching was not always a smooth ride. There were multiple factors that contributed to scheduling and attendance challenges including internet connectivity and competing demands for time to complete daily tasks and deliverables. By April 2019, the team coaching initiative was faltering. Key members of the team were lured away by the offer of larger, better-paying positions within the sector. However, when leaving, they expressed their regret, mentioning specifically the difference that team coaching had made to their individual - and the team's - overall sense of effectiveness.

Working with the Team Leader

Following the completion of an in-depth initial questionnaire to provide insights into Yasmin's vision, values, attachments, goals, and ambitions, Marilyn and Yasmin were able to build a strong 'whole person' relationship. Each coaching session had a defined rhythm: catching the coach up and sharing successes, covering key items of importance to Yasmin, talking about the fit with the vision and longer-term aspirations, discussing resourcing and an accountability framework. Thought-provoking visioning questions like "What would a great year be like?" helped Yasmin articulate key aspects for the future.

Given Yasmin's commitment to personal development, the need was not to provide her with more books or readings.

“*The value of full, thorough and thoughtful discussions that recognized me as a whole person including my anxieties and stressors,*”

was one of the main benefits of coaching for Yasmin. Marilyn's use of examples and suggestions about ways to think differently about issues were practical and easy to apply. She describes feeling more confident and empowered as a female leader and, with Marilyn's encouragement, successfully applied for a

more senior role in the organization – notwithstanding the fact that she was already filling more than one role after the departure of senior team members and difficulty finding replacements!

The last months of coaching focused on managing the transition and were different in frequency and duration. During this time, Marilyn made herself available whenever she could flex her schedule to meet Yasmin for a quick 30 minute ‘check-in and issue’ discussion. Yasmin describes this relationship with Marilyn as highly influential personally and with the team, it helped her be centered, focused and able to play a more effective role in the team coaching.

Impact

Yasmin thanked the coaches for preparing her to hold the organization together following the loss of key members of senior management, and for her successful application to become Regional Director of Operations within Farm Africa. She observed that she had more insights from her team members over the short period of coaching than in all the years that they have worked together, stating that

“*The commitment to spending a block of time together enhanced productivity. Team members were delegating effectively, engaging in less micromanagement. Being less*

operational freed them up to ask more strategic questions while providing the necessary oversight and monitoring.”

Their commitment to scale the learning and apply the knowledge more broadly has led to increased engagement across the organization as well as a stronger and better articulation of ideas by staff members. The 40 or so staff in Addis are making more decisions and are moving faster so the projects are getting executed more quickly. There is better engagement of community partners, including local farmers and the project spend rate is up as decisions are being made closer to the client and with more creativity.

There will always be more money and time needed to do what NGO leaders set out to accomplish, but without an appreciation for what has been accomplished, progress can grind to a halt. By focusing on appreciation, Marilyn, Nobantu and Yared helped prepare the leadership team to take on bigger roles both within and outside of Farm Africa.



Resilience in Times of Change: The Role of Coaching

EthicalCoach at Amref

The close of 2019 was a testing time for Amref's leadership team. Financial need drove an organizational downsizing with 25 staff members being let go. Misrak Makonnen, Country Director, reflected that the trust that the coaching process had fostered lessened the impact of this traumatic event, both on the senior team as well as across the broader organization.

The Coaching Journey

After meeting and spending time with co-coaches, Chip McFarlane and Ayni Tilahun Getaneh, at the Ethiopian NGO Leadership Coaching Summit in October 2018, Misrak was optimistic that coaching could help herself and her team. She had not experienced coaching before but saw the opportunity for her direct reports who were "only a team in name ...operating as a group of functional heads" to strengthen their skills in support of Amref's vision to create lasting health change in Africa by enabling every

community to have access to health services.

The team benefited enormously from the synergy between their coaches. Both Chip and Ayni are committed to helping their clients become the best possible versions of themselves. Believing that,

"conversations are the vehicle of transformation,"

the co-coaches spent time together, getting to know each other as people as well as to design highly interactive team coaching sessions.

The foundations were laid at the first team coaching session when expectations were identified, roles clarified and the coaching process described. Having Ayni present in the room with the Amref team enabled higher levels of commitment and focus. As coaching progressed, "discussions moved away from operational things" and focused more on the future of the organization as members felt comfortable challenging each other. As one team member said: "Every time we asked a question, we found the answer ourselves - rather than someone giving us the answer to our own problems. The process made us feel we are capable of communicating as a team."

Skillful use of the 5 "C" High Performing Team Model (Peter Hawkins, Systemic

Team Coaching) provided sufficient structure for the team to “get on the same page, connecting, communicating, thinking out of the box - and taking the organization to the next level”. Ayni would sit close to the screen in the room, as if she and Chip were next to each other, working seamlessly together. They developed a code: when Ayni posed a particular question, Chip knew that he needed to intervene. Misrak noted how well Ayni facilitated the discussions, including when Chip was not able to be present. When he was present, Chip’s strategic insights and ability to nail the critical issues advanced the team’s understanding and acceptance of the challenges and opportunities as well as their commitment to each other and to finding solutions. “We are more connected and focused, and share ideas more. Everyone is now in a position to contribute to the organization’s vision with shared values.”

The value of making sure everyone was being heard was an important insight. If Chip’s internet connection to the meeting dropped for whatever reason, the conversation often continued in Amharic. On rejoining, Chip would watch the energy and the body language as team members engaged with each other, thinking together and problem-solving as a collective, carefully choosing his moment to re-enter the conversation. As Misrak commented, “ we are able to listen to one another on a completely different

dimension.” A team member observed:

“ *We thought we knew each other before. But after the coaching, we knew each other a whole lot more.* ”

Leader Coaching

These one-on-one sessions with Chip were used by Misrak to explore what it takes to move an organization and a team forward. She appreciated the less structured format and Chip’s warmth and wisdom. The time together was a welcome respite from the very demanding operational environment, a time to think strategically, reflect and to work on herself and her understanding of human behaviour. As Misrak observed:

“ *At the end of the day, what matters is people. All NGOs do similar things and deliver to similar communities. Where you can differentiate in quality is linked to people - how strategic they are and how to develop higher (levels of) management to be strategic. If that strong base isn’t formed, it won’t help the person on the street.* ”

Moving Forward

During the celebrations for the end of the first year of coaching, Amref team members described their journey:

“ We are now a big boat sailing out to sea far from shore....without EthicalCoach, we would still be moored at the dock with high winds and rough seas. ”

They spoke to the value of being more focused, of zooming in on issues that will take Amref to the next level. In addition, they indicated that different conversations are taking place across the organization. Misrak is now committed to the value of coaching and would like it to continue to help staff deal with the “chaotic external environment and the many changes and adjustments taking place at Amref.”

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August 2020