

Leku Town Children demonstrate for clean environment

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It was 12 May 2007. Around 10:00 AM, shouts from crowds of about 200 children bounced in Leku town, in Shebedino Wereda of Southern nations Nationalities and Peoples Region of Ethiopia. The shouts were not for the best soccer team; they were quests for clean environment. They were shouts for improved health.

Children were carrying different placards that condemn open defecation. One placard reads, “We need to live in clean environment!”

Another reads:

“Cats do not defecate in the open, but we people do! Let’s learn from cats!”

“We don’t tolerate open defecation!”

“Defecating in open field is rude and anti-development act”, etc.

The demonstration was conducted on a market day; so many people were watching the event with attention and surprise.

The Leku School Sanitation Club organized the demonstration, with children who participated in community-led total sanitation field exercises that were conducted in their villages.



“What do the children mean?”

Seyoum Getachew Action Research Officer at Plan Ethiopia Shebedino Programme Unit says the demonstration was a call from children to the Leku Municipality and the surrounding people to end open defecation and create a clean and healthy environment for children.

An eleven year old girl says, “I am bored of living in a dirty environment. I am tired of fighting with flies. I want to live in a clean environment. I need to be clean and healthy.”

According to Seyoum, the children gained the momentum for the demonstration after they participated in community-led total sanitation exercises. It was learnt that police gave the children protection. The event was also covered by the local FM radio.