

Early Intervention Caregiver Feedback Evaluation Event



On Friday, March 25, 2022, the rehab department met with 22 parents who had just completed the newly established early intervention program with their children. While the physiotherapists took care of the children and looked after them in a specially set up, small, remedial kindergarten, the parents talked openly about their experiences during the last five months. In a first round of talks we asked the parents three different questions:

- What has been the greatest benefit you have experienced from our early intervention program?**
- What helps you the most to be able to participate in the program?**
- What are the biggest barriers to participating in the program?**



After a brief hesitation, the parents told us and, more importantly, each other what they experienced during the five-month program, how their children were doing before therapy, and where they are today.

The parents also shared their joy and hardships with us and gave us a deep insight into what it means to live with a disabled child in Ethiopia and what an important role Addis Guzo, besides the therapy, has played for them in the past five months. They proudly described every seemingly small progress of their children and the hope they feel as a result. In some moments, however, tears of despair flowed, as there is almost no support for them and they very often feel left alone by the state, society or even their own family. Here are some voices:

"Everyone is so friendly here. Even the guards at the gate. When I enter the Addis Guzo compound, my child starts smiling and we are happy for a while." "My family prayed that my child would die and turned away from me because I didn't want to expose them". "When we practice at home and my little one doesn't participate properly, I tell her I'll let Addisalem know, and then she smiles and practices better." "I was told my child wouldn't learn anything, and now she has learned to walk." "I had a lot of trouble accepting my child and was hopeless, but I have learned to grieve that she is not the child I expected. It took some time, but now I accept her for who she is and the amazing progress she has made." "On the farm where I live, I am not allowed to do my laundry where everyone else does. Because I have a disabled child, I have to go down to the river." "Friends advised me to abandon my baby and have another healthy one."



After this very intensive first round, we divided the group into pairs and asked them to answer specific questions about our early intervention program and parent coaching individually. The answers will help us better understand the needs of the parents and adjust our program accordingly. But one of the most important questions at the end was, "What will happen now that Addis Guzo is no longer around for us?" The parents asked for a regular follow-up appointment which we agreed to do and we decided to start a support group together with the parents.