A one day workshop on “Quality of Primary Education in Ethiopia” organized by the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS) opened today at Semien Hotel, Addis Ababa to inform the major stakeholders of the education sector about the findings of the study titled “Quality of Primary education in Ethiopia: the Case of Selected Schools in Four Regional States” and to gather inputs that help to enrich the report which is envisaged to be synthesized into a policy brief to be circulated among policy makers. The study was carried out by three senior researchers from the Institute of Educational Research, Addis Ababa University. H.E. Ato Fuad Ibrahim, State Minister of Education officially opened the workshop.

The study was undertaken on primary schools selected from four Regional States, namely; Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State (SNNPR) using a purposive and stratified sampling technique. It has explored the determinants and contributing factors to the decline of quality of education in Ethiopian primary schools. The findings of the study based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of data indicate that there seems to be an overall consensus among teachers, students and school leaders regarding the decline of quality of education in Ethiopian primary schools. The decline in quality of education is expressed in terms of the students’ inability to attain the basic literacy and numeracy skills expected at different grade levels. The study also identified the determinant factors for the decline of quality in Ethiopian primary schools to be:

- Lack of enabling environment in and outside the school to implement the new policy innovations such as self-contained classes, automatic promotion at the lower cycle, continuous assessment, active learning, teachers’ action research, teacher professional development and induction;
• The school leadership has not been able to transform schools due to lack of competence, commitment and focus on the core activities of teaching and learning, which is aggravated by leadership turn over in primary schools.

The study has also identified the factors contributing to the decline in quality of primary education to be teacher, student and community related.

The study concludes that, in general, the major challenge causing decline of education in Ethiopian primary schools may not be inherent to the policies, but rather the problem is associated with failure to align and properly translate the policies and strategies into action. Failure in ensuring quality education at the foundation (primary schools) has rolling effect on the quality of teaching and learning at subsequent higher levels of the education systems. Moreover, the study underlined that the present scenario of declining quality of primary education would continue unless serious and urgent attention is given to and measures are taken by all concerned bodies. The following recommendations have been forwarded by the study to address the challenge:

• Ensuring deployment of capable and committed school leadership;
• Initiating professional collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools to benefit the schools as well as the HEIs in areas of training and capacity building, research collaborations and in engaging in professional discussions and reflections.
• Revisiting the alignment among policy innovations, strategies and their implementation vis-à-vis school capacity and making the necessary adjustments more frequently.

Over 60 professionals and officials representing relevant federal ministries, regional education bureaus, Addis Ababa sub-city education offices, universities, research institutes, primary schools, professional associations and non-governmental organization are gathered for the day long workshop to discuss and validate the findings and recommendations of the study; and to deliberate on the way forward to improve quality of primary education in the country. The workshop is sponsored by the Royal Society, UK – Pfizer African Academies Program, as part of its support for the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences in 2012.