



## Editor's Note

Dear readers,

We are pleased to welcome you to the March 2022 CRPF quarterly newsletter. This edition presents two summaries of research presented at the monthly CRPF seminars. These are from papers with, 1) Effects of the conflict on adolescent education and mental health: preliminary findings from qualitative research in South Gondar, and 2) The Assessment of Protection and Support Services for Sexually Abused Female Children: the case of OPRIFS Safe Home. It also addresses Young Lives Third Phone Survey Headline Report on COVID-19 and Young Lives press release on unprecedented severe hunger in southern Ethiopia.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions. For more information, please contact us via

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## Unprecedented crises trigger severe hunger in southern Ethiopia

Key new evidence from Oxford's in-depth Young Lives survey:

- More than 40% of families in drought-affected region ran out of food in 2021
- One in three young people said they or their family went to sleep hungry
- 75% were worried about running out of food – a near 100% increase on 2020 figures
- And some one in three young people said they, or other household members, went to sleep hungry because there was not enough food.
- These alarming figures represent a staggering increase in food insecurity compared to when Young Lives contacted the same families at the end of 2020.
- Potential negative long-term impacts of severe malnutrition on children's growing bodies and minds are witnessed by our long-running study.

Further information here:  
<https://www.younglives-ethiopia.org/>

## Young Lives Third Phone Survey Headline Report on COVID-19 released

The COVID-19 Phone Survey Headline Report: Listening to Young Lives at Work in Ethiopia – Fifth Call was released by Young Lives Ethiopia in March. The report outlines the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic on education, employment, food security and mental health of the Young Lives respondents who have been followed since 2001, with the younger cohort now aged 19-20 years old and the older cohort 26-27 years old.

The fifth call took place between October and December 2021 and reached 1,738 young people. Worryingly, the results show very high rates of vaccine hesitancy, with 29 per cent of respondents unlikely to take a vaccine due to either concerns over its safety (and possible side effects) or being against vaccines in general.

Young Lives Country Director Alula Pankhurst says "The early signs of recovery following the lifting of COVID-19 2020 restrictions have faltered as the country faces multiple crises. Recent political and economic events, compounded by a year-long conflict have led to falling employment, an increase in poverty and alarming numbers going hungry, especially in SNNP. Widespread vaccine hesitancy and low levels of vaccine uptake leave Ethiopia vulnerable to potential new COVID variants going forward.

Further information here:  
<https://www.younglives-ethiopia.org/>



## Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

### Effects of the conflict on adolescent education and mental health: preliminary findings from qualitative research in South Gondar Workneh Yadete

#### Introduction

Ethiopia has seen the largest number of conflict-induced displacements. Mental disturbance has been identified as a major public health concern among conflict-affected people, including students.

According to World Health Organization data dating from 2019, in conflict zones "one in five people live with some form of mental disorder, ranging from mild depression or anxiety to psychosis." In addition, "nearly one in ten people live with a moderate or severe mental disorder."

The study analysed the effects of the conflict of the Ethiopian government and TPLF on adolescent education and mental health focusing its research in South Gondar.

#### Key findings: conflict-related impacts on adolescent education

##### Impacts on adolescents' educational aspirations

**Adolescents' educational aspirations have been negatively affected by the conflict.**

Adolescents emphasised that with the uncertainty that the conflict has brought about they were less confident in the role that education could play in helping their future development, with many fearing a return of the TPLF.

**Many young people highlighted that their aspirations had shifted away from higher education towards defence-related goals.**

Many young people highlighted that their educational aspirations had shifted as a result of the war and that they were now focused on how they could contribute to the defence of their community and state through joining the Amhara Special Forces, National Defence Forces, the militia or the Fano.

##### Impacts on adolescent school enrolment

**Students are dropping out at the secondary school level due to conflict-related physical and economic insecurity**

- Students who need to travel to attend secondary school are dropping out as caregivers cannot afford transportation costs due to rising costs of living and transportation costs have tripled.
- Mothers concerned about adolescent girls' safety because of the insecurity are unwilling to allow their

daughters to continue in school.

- Some households are unable to afford books and stationaries that are required to attend school due to the rising inflation and poverty.
- Some students are delayed to enrol on school due to being engaged in either seasonal agricultural work or domestic worker till November, which makes them late to join the school year.



**Many adolescents, especially but not exclusively boys, are dropping out to join the army for both patriotic and economic reasons**

- Adolescents especially boys and some girls are dropping out of school to join the army and notably the Amhara Special Forces to defend their region.
- Others are dropping out of school and joining the military as there is an opportunity to obtain a firearm on the battlefield since guns are seen as a valuable asset nowadays in the region. Alternatively, in other cases, sons are pressured to join the conflict if their fathers have a privately owned gun which would be forced to be loaned to others which has a risk of loss.
- Some parents are afraid to send their sons to school fearing they would be forcefully recruited, as many young people secretly join forces without parental permission.

##### Impacts on adolescent school performance

**Many students reported negative effects of the war on their ability to focus on their studies**

- Boys in particular are losing focus on their studies due to the possibilities they might be called up to training for the armed forces.

- Students are being very stressed and unable to concentrate on their studies since their fathers and relatives are participating in the war.

### Impacts on education budget

#### ***Teachers burdened due to lack of new hires and rising costs of living***

- Budget for schools is redirected to supporting costs of the war, resulting in over-burdening of teachers as limited teachers in remote rural kebeles.
- Teachers are asked to contribute one month's salary to support the military but given the rapidly rising costs of living it has created a challenge in their living conditions.
- Limited access to textbooks due to budget cuts – students have reported they are sharing one textbook with ten students.
- The dearth of books and teaching materials compounded by the destruction of school facilities and teaching aids during the war

### **Key findings: conflict-related impacts on adolescent mental health and coping repertoires**

#### **Adolescent conflict-related trauma**

##### ***Adolescents reported intense fear for their safety and lives during the conflict***

- Many people fled to other localities because of fear. Only the poor and the ones who don't have family stayed in their locality.
- There is frustration and fear which also affects the education, students was being unable to follow and attend their classes.

#### **Psychosocial challenges for Internally Displaced People (IDPs)**

##### ***Overcrowded conditions, risks of sexual and gender-based violence compounded the psychosocial distress of IDPs, many of whom had witnessed killings and assault***

- The temporary shelters of IDPs are very small compared with the large number of IDPs, which exposed them to sexual harassment and/or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- The duration of the displacement was another challenge being a rainy season, which makes IDPs' camp life very difficult.

##### ***Limited access to Psychosocial Support (PSS) support, even for IDPs in camps, and tense relationships with host communities due to insecurity, economic downturn and a clash of social norms***

- Some IDPs are taking medication due to psychological problems - it is associated with war and displacement.

- Some victims with psychological problems are professionals. The community as well professionals are impacted with psychological problems.

### Implications for policy and practice

#### **To tackle conflict-related impacts on adolescent education consider:**

- Prioritising restoration of the national and regional education budget to rebuild educational infrastructure and equipment, and invest in additional teaching staff.
- Investing in psychological first aid training for teaching staff and counsellors to be able to support students affected directly and indirectly by the conflict to cope and to re-focus on their studies.
- Providing pathways for students who dropped out due to enlisting in the war effort or those who have been displaced as IDPs to return to school and to catch up on missed education.
- Investing in peacebuilding curricula in schools to encourage non-violent approaches to conflict resolution and to work towards restoring social cohesion across communities.

#### **To support adolescent psychosocial wellbeing and mental health consider:**

- Investing in psychosocial support through Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) and school system for traumatised young people, with a particular focus on IDPs, survivors of sexual violence, adolescents with a disability, and those who have lost family members during the conflict.
- Providing a package of support for IDPs to be rehabilitated once they return to their communities of origin, including cash and food assistance, psychosocial support and access to livelihood opportunities.
- Ensuring funding in place to strengthen referral pathways to specialist services for those in need.



## Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

### The Assessment of Protection and Support Services for Sexually Abused Female Children: in the case of OPRIFS Safe Home

Sara Abebe

#### Introduction

This study illuminated the protection and support services for sexually abused female children with a particular reference to children from the Organization for Prevention Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS) safe home. The research enlightened the psychosocial support and the legal protection provided for these vulnerable female children. The effectiveness of the service and challenges of service provision in the centre was examined too.

#### Method

The research design applied for this study was qualitative research.

- Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants from the target groups to get a better understanding of the services at the shelter.
- 10 sexually abused female children between age 12-18 under OPRIFS was selected as the target group and 6 key informants, four from OPRIFS and two from government office (Nefas Silk Sub-City police office and the expert from woreda 6 women and children affair) were selected as key informants based on their expertise.
- To have a deeper thought the study used primary and secondary data collection techniques.

#### Conclusion

The findings of this study signify the provision of protection and support services for sexually abused female children at the safe home to help them meet their emotional, social, and spiritual needs with significant service efficiency despite the challenges. All-inclusive psycho-social supports and legal protections at the safe home imply the holistic approach of the centre in providing services. The linkage of resources which is from the donors to the beneficiaries to serve the children is an implication of social work practice at the safe home. With the protection and supports provided at the safe home, the finding explored that there are significant physical and psychological changes in the lives of survivors compared to their situation at the time of admission. The level of recovery of sexually abused female children who have been receiving the services at the safe home revealed the effectiveness of the services regardless of the challenges like unable to close cases from law enforcing bodies in a short period and lack of adequate resources and skilled manpower. To sum up, the finding revealed the contribution of OPRIFS safe home in saving the lives of sexually abused female child survivors through protection and support regardless of the challenges.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings the researcher recommended the following points for the improvement and quality protection service provisions at the safe home (shelter) and other stakeholders.

- Having a minimum standard for shelter quality nationally can increase the quality of the services at the shelter.
- Increasing financial capacity elevates services provision. Granting land from the government for the shelters can address to alleviate the strain on the organization.
- Legal bodies should give priority to sexually abused girls while investigating and give decisions as fast as possible.
- Better coordination, cooperation, and synergy among stakeholders increase the quality of the service to a better stage.
- Strengthening the participatory (bottom-up approach) approach while dealing with the sensitive issue can help to find out the root cause of the problem.
- Hiring skilled professionals who have the expertise, core value, ethics, and principles to help vulnerable children heal emotionally and spiritually.
- Providing up-to-date job training continuously will help the experts to apply their skills to assist the survivors to rehabilitate and re-join society to be better citizens.

#### Interested to Know about CRPF?

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) was established in 2010 to promote work on child research, policy and practice. CRPF makes use of monthly seminars, quarterly newsletters and annual publications as a means to achieve its objectives. The publications are also available at the Young Lives Ethiopia website.

If you want to know more, please contact us via [crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com](mailto:crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com)