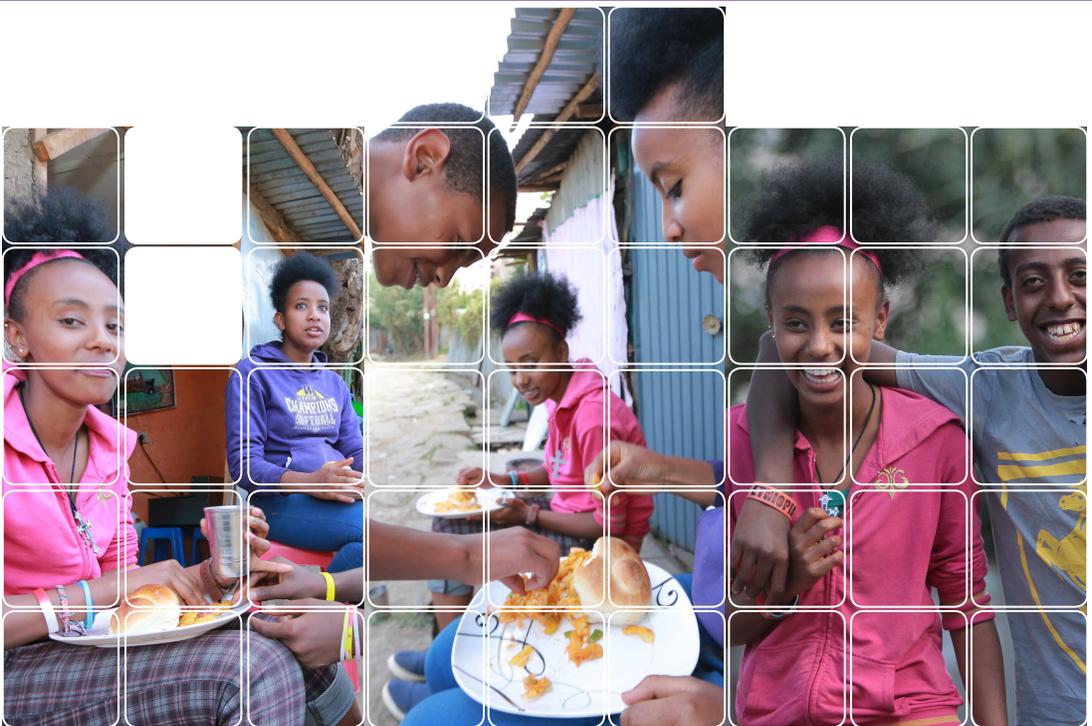


# Improving Children's Lives through Research

Summaries from Presentations at the Monthly Seminar Series of the Child Research and Practice Forum in 2015



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and Practice Forum in 2015**

**Summaries by: Clare Gorman**

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## Foreword

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF), since its inception in September 2010, has organized a series of monthly child research seminars held at the Federal Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. The audiences include policy makers, practitioners, researchers, other interested individuals and institutions. The Forum seek to improve the uptake of research findings by stakeholders. As it is well known, the CRPF generally strives to create, strengthen and sustain linkages between research, policy and practice with the overall aim of improving the lives of children in Ethiopia.

The year 2015 was a very successful one in this regard as it witnessed the presentation of a good deal of research papers on a number of pressing topics on children lives – children's agency, exploitation, subjective well-being, disability, re-integration and protection, and early marriage. The papers originated from various individuals and organizations and attracted many interested audiences.

The Forum brought together participants from government and non-government organizations, donors, bilateral and multilateral organizations, the media, research institutions and interested individuals. It also facilitated constructive discussions and debates on children, and promoted learning among a wide range of interested stakeholders. In addition, the Forum has produced nine newsletters with summaries from the monthly paper presentations. It has also organized annual workshops, leading to publications.

This annual booklet comprises summaries of six monthly presentations from the Forum. These are meant to promote further interest on child poverty research, provide condensed research findings to stakeholders, stimulate discussion and instill the collaboration of researchers, policy makers and practitioners for the betterment of children's lives in the country.



*Alula Pankhurst (PhD)*

*Country Director*

*Young Lives Ethiopia*



# Children's Agency in Responding to Shocks and Adverse Events in Ethiopia

*Nardos Chuta, Young Lives*

## Introduction

Shocks are a common occurrence in Ethiopia. For example, about 80 per cent of Ethiopia's households obtain their livelihood from traditional low-productivity agricultural activities, which are vulnerable to recurrent droughts. The loss of such livelihoods through shocks continues to generate considerable poverty.

A lot has been said about household-level shocks and how households respond to shocks, mainly in economics, and much has been left out regarding how poor children experience and respond to these. This paper seeks to understand the impacts of shocks on children and children's active role in managing such impacts at different levels by examining children's experiences of shocks, the agency of poor children in coping with the impacts, and the sustainability of children's decisions in responding to these.

The study finds that though shocks are a routine part of the precarious existence of the children studied, these children still consider them sudden and upsetting events that will have a significant effect on their lives. Whether the shock is the debilitating illness of a parent, rising food prices or drought, which seem common events in their communities, for the children, each shock is an upsetting event that can have long-term impacts.

The paper also argues that during difficult circumstances or crises, children are active social agents. Their agency is primarily reflected in their decisions to take on paid work and subsidise their families' incomes and their own basic needs during crises. However, it also spells out that some of their coping mechanisms are so informal and fragile that they are only applicable in specific situations and then do not necessarily bring about sustainable change. In some situations, children are seen resorting to unfavourable coping mechanisms which later give rise to other shocks with long-term developmental and health consequences for them.

Finally, the paper suggests that agency of children can be described as constrained and 'thin', cautioning that it is necessary to consider contexts and to acknowledge children's agency as active while at the same time offering protection, in case children's decisions lead to other vulnerabilities in the future.

## Methodology

This paper uses survey and qualitative data collected from individuals and groups of children and young people in five communities (two urban and three rural) in Ethiopia. It draws on Young Lives data, including data from two qualitative sub-studies carried out in 2009 and 2010. Three rounds of qualitative data, generated in 2007, 2008 and 2011, are used to supplement to the data from these sub-studies.

The paper tries to allow for the analysis of context-based impacts of shocks along age and gender lines and pays particular attention to the differences between urban and rural households and children.

Individual interviews with both children and caregivers, as well as focus group discussions with the same respondents, were used. In group discussions with children and their caregivers and individual interviews, the following questions were asked: What are the strong strategies used by children to respond to shocks? Or How do children who have experienced different shocks respond to shocks? What types of shocks/risks have you encountered in your life that you remember? And what have you done to respond to the risks you encountered?

## Findings

Poor children trying to cope with the impacts of shocks are also active social agents. Even though children are active social agents, the strategies they employ sometimes only enable them to escape a situation and do not lead to long-term solutions, thus sometimes leading to other vulnerabilities.

### *Experiences of shocks*

In general, shocks result in different outcomes, which may be temporary or permanent. Some of the outcomes revolve around children's well-being, schooling and work.

*Adverse events such as parental ill health, absence, death and divorce and children's health shocks lead to unmet material and emotional needs:* Death of an important family member can have economic repercussions on children that may still be visible some time. Absence of parents is also psychologically harmful, causing children's educational performance to deteriorate.

*Children's own ill health is also perceived as a shock:* Rural children in particular reported suffering from working for long hours in sunny and windy

weather conditions. Shocks are likely to affect children through worsening their nutrition, hampering their school performance, causing them to leave school or damaging their health.

*Extra responsibilities for children as a result of shocks:* Parents' or caregivers' sickness worries children who may need to contribute to the needs of other household members by engaging in paid and household work which can lead to them dropping out of school.

*Environmental and economic shocks:* An increase in the cost of living has had an impact on urban households and children too. Higher food prices were accompanied by prolonged drought, which has led to a decline in agricultural production.

### ***The agency (resilience) of children in coping with the impacts of shocks***

The main contribution children make is through their work, whether paid or unpaid. These include: fishing, growing vegetables, taxi assistants, doing public works, selling firewood and planting seedlings. Others also devise strategies ahead of anticipated shocks.

### ***Sustainability? Agency as short-term trade-offs***

The way children make decisions about their family situations and also their own life has a lasting effect. Some of children's coping strategies are either ineffective or create harmful consequences. For example, short-term school absence has long-term consequences due to its irreversibility.

Rationing food and eating less so there would be enough for whole family could have serious consequences for children's health, with potentially long-lasting effects.

Most of children's coping mechanisms are informal risk-coping arrangements and strategies which might work well only for certain types of risks, i.e. household-level risks. Thus, some forms of crisis may account for limitations in children's resilience.

## **Conclusion**

The findings indicate that children's experience of shocks is a threat to their well-being and education. Protection mechanisms need to consider how children experience shocks, not just how households experience them. It is important to take children's agency into account. Poor children subject to major shocks and adverse events are not simply passive. Poor children, though most affected by crisis, also have their own responding

mechanisms, even when anticipating crisis. They are capable social actors who shape their difficult circumstances, as well as being shaped by them.

Children's agency in coping with the impacts of shocks may be fragile. The children's evidence shows that there is an important distinction to be made between pervasive, area-wide shocks and less pervasive, household-level shocks, as far as children's agency is concerned. In situations where environmental shocks were experienced, children did not opt to engage in diverse income-generating activities like they did for the household-level shocks. Though both types of shocks triggered decline in the well-being of the children, children affected by environmental shocks needed to rely on additional coping strategies, apart from hard work.

Regardless of their active role in 'absorbing shocks', children are seen resorting to unfavourable coping mechanisms. Making quick decisions to leave school and engage in risky and hard paid work have perpetuated their vulnerability, with long-term consequences.

## **Recommendations**

Protection mechanisms need to consider how children experience shock, not just how households experience them.

Intervention programmes to protect children from shocks need to consider contexts in order to be effective. Social protection systems should comprise a large set of formal and informal mechanisms to manage risks. This would help reduce the impact of future adverse shocks, which might otherwise perpetuate the cycle of vulnerability.

Since some of the short-term responding mechanisms bring irreversible consequences, protection programmes should consider expanding counter-cyclically during times of crisis and employing mechanisms such as a more responsive application process and a shorter timeframe for when people can reapply.

4

Measures should be put in place which should ideally enhance the capacity of the household during periods of shock with minimal upset for children. Protection strategies should be designed without compromising the well-being of children.

Formal training programmes can target children to help them reduce the impacts of risks and make them less vulnerable. This would help reduce the impact of future adverse shocks, which might otherwise perpetuate the cycle of vulnerability.

# Ethiopians Fighting against Child Exploitation (E-FACE)

*World Vision Ethiopia*

## Introduction

Although the Government is working to eliminate it, child labour in its worst forms continues to be a major problem for Ethiopia. The Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (2011) found that 17 per cent of children age 5-11 and 55 per cent of children age 12-14 perform a variety of jobs including street vending, domestic work and manual labour in which they are vulnerable to exploitation and experience very little protection.

Ethiopians Fighting against Child Exploitation (E-FACE) is a project led by World Vision in partnership with Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) and Mission for Community Development Program (MCDP), working to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse, and all other forms of violence affecting children. The project strives to eliminate exploitative child labour through:

- Reducing exploitative child labour through provision of education services, improving livelihoods and social protection;
- Building capacity of federal and local government institutions and communities to combat child labor;
- Raising public awareness on exploitative child labour and its root causes;
- Supporting researches to inform policy and increase national knowledge base; and
- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

The programme focuses on the traditional weaving sector, but also other child labour sectors including agriculture, domestic work, fishing, pottery and construction.

This summary is based on a presentation given to the Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) in which World Vision introduced the work of E-FACE and outlined some of the major results achieved over the past three years in five key areas.

## **E-FACE Project in Figures**

- Project period: 1 December 2011 – 30 November 2015
- Project budget: US\$11,079,000 (US\$10,000,000 grant, US\$1,079,000 cost share)
- Project targets:
  - 20,000 children, aged 5 – 17 years
  - 7,000 households
  - The project addresses child labour mostly in the traditional weaving industry, which involves trafficking of children for work from Gamo Gofa and Wolaita to Addis Ababa.

## **Major Results**

### ***Promoting education opportunities for children***

Accomplishments include:

- Latrines and water points for 39 target schools;
- 18,459 target children who had been engaged in and at high risk of entering to child labour supported to attend school regularly;
- 47 early childhood care and education centres established;
- 90 per cent of teachers in 50 target schools trained on interactive/innovative pedagogical methods; and
- 1,269 children who had been engaged in and at high risk of entering to child labour supported to be enrolled in vocational services.

Contributing towards:

- 95.1 per cent gross enrolment in target schools has at 95.1 per cent;
- 86.1 per cent of target children have been retained in formal education;
- Decrease in dropout rates in target schools from its baseline of 12 per cent to 6 per cent; and
- Increased awareness in communities of target schools of the values of educational interventions

## ***Livelihood and youth employment***

Accomplishments include:

- 3,313 target households provided with access to financial services;
- 686 business owners in the weaving sector adopting codes of conduct regarding labour conditions for young people;
- 428 target households (weavers) linked to sustainable markets while enabling them to capture increased shares of the value of production; and
- More than 3,000 households keeping their children well-nourished and more resilient to shocks.

Contributing towards:

- Increase in household incomes by 42.6 per cent;
- Increase in household assets by 12.8 per cent;
- Increase in annual household expenditure by 39.8 per cent;
- 16.8 per cent of households with additional employment sources that remain active for more than a year; and
- 35 per cent of target working children working in businesses with minimum occupational safety and health standards.

## ***Social Protection***

Accomplishments include:

- More than 8,500 birth certificates issued for target children;
- Child Labour Protection bylaws developed and approved in all target kebele administrations and districts;
- Community-based child labour monitoring and referral systems established in 67 target kebeles;
- Training on the effects and hazards of child labour for 62 school clubs, 305 labour inspectors and 1,952 government staff; and

- Workshops to internalise International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and policies for 150 judges from all regions; and to internalise the National Action Plan (NAP) on Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) for 77 regional and federal of offices and media groups.

Contributing towards:

- More child abuse cases being referred to court and resolved; and
- Child abuse cases being reported to concerned bodies along the reporting line/system.

### ***National institutions capacity building***

Accomplishments include:

- The development, approval, and publication of 1,600 copies of Labour Inspection Guidelines;
- The amendment of draft National Action Plans on WFCL as well as endorsement, approval and publication; and
- The preparation, endorsement, approval and publication of a Child Labour Mainstreaming Manual for the SNNPR Education Bureau.

Contributing towards:

- Putting in place a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system; and
- Periodic child status monitoring.

### ***Improving the knowledge base***

Research on:

- Workplace Hazard Assessment and How to Regulate Standards in the Informal Sector (Gondar University);
- Push-pull Factors in Child Trafficking (Addis Ababa University); and
- Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on Child Vulnerabilities, including Child Labour (Population Media Centre).

## Recommendations

- Create strong project structure up to grassroots level and successful orientation and involvement of government and community structures;
- Utilise logical and leveraging project components such as education, livelihood, social protection, capacity building, and awareness raising;
- Invest in a very good monitoring system (for example, Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Protocol [CMEP]);
- Explore volunteerism;
- Institutionalise efforts and promote sustainability; and
- Foster ownership (local structures have strong ownership of the child protection activities).

# Children's Worlds National Report – Ethiopia

*Yehualashet Mekonen and Negussie Dejene, Jacob's Foundation*

## Introduction

Awareness of children's subjective well-being is vital if they are to be encouraged to become valuable members of their families and communities.

This report presents the results of the country survey for Ethiopia carried out as part of the second wave of the Children's Worlds survey – a major new international study of children's lives and well-being. The Children's Worlds project aims to gather representative data from a range of countries, and fills a significant gap in evidence about children's lives in terms of the diversity of countries involved, the broad range of topics covered and the age groups surveyed.

The initial vision of the project was to create a worldwide survey which could inform policymakers, professionals, opinion leaders, parents and children themselves in order to promote improvements to the quality of children's lives. Conceptually, the project is part of a wider movement to develop positive, child-centred, self-reported indicators of child well-being.

## Methodology

The survey has been developed as a collaborative project between researchers in the participating countries, co-ordinated by a core group. Each national research team was responsible for all aspects of conducting the survey in their country – based on a set of guidelines covering issues such as questionnaire translation, sampling, ethics and practicalities of administration.

The survey was based on three versions of a self-completion questionnaire for the three different age groups of children aged 8, 10 and 12 years old and was conducted in each country (or region of a country) with a representative sample of children in mainstream schools.

A probability sampling method was adopted for the Ethiopia survey. The survey involved three-stage cluster sampling. In the first stage of sampling, 50 districts were randomly selected across the country using a probability proportional to size (PPS) technique (size being the number of children enrolled in primary schools in each of the districts). In the second stage of sampling, two schools were randomly selected from each District and totaled 100 schools from the 50 Districts.

The third stage of sampling involved random selection of children from the three categories of grades. At this stage, school rosters for the respective grades were used as a frame for the selection. At this final stage of selection, a sample of ten students from each grade (a total of 30 students from each school) was selected systematically for the study. During selection, gender balance was considered and an equal number of boys and girls were included in the sample in almost all sample schools. All in all, 3,000 students were included in the study.

## **Findings**

### ***Feelings about the home environment***

- About 43-78 per cent of the children were in agreement with most aspects of their home environment such as:
  - safety at home
  - availability of quiet places to study at home
  - consideration of children's views in the family
  - family care and relationships

### ***Feelings about friends and other people***

- The overwhelming majority of all children were positive about their friends and most have enough friends
- The majority of children were most happy with people around them (their friends and people in their neighbourhood) and have good relationships with people in general

### ***Feelings about their neighbours***

In the survey, children were asked some questions in relation to their perceptions regarding neighborhoods and interactions which affect their subjective wellbeing.

- More than half of the children have enough places in their locality to play or to have a good time
- Around three in five feel safe when waking in their localities

### ***Feelings about the school environment***

- The majority of the children were positive about their school environment
- More than four-fifths of the children like to go to school
- Greater proportions of children were positive about their teachers as well as their safety at school

### ***Time use***

As identified by the Young Lives program, studying children's daily time use provides important background information to assess and identify key aspects of children's well-being, as well as their experiences of life-course transitions. Using computers and watching TV are activities that most children rarely or never spent time on as the items are rarely available to most families in Ethiopia. Most children also never took classes outside school time. On the other hand, a large proportion of children said that they spent time helping around the house almost every day, while an almost equal proportion spent time doing their homework almost every day. A little more than a fifth of the children also reported they spent some time almost every day in playing sports or doing exercise.

### ***Awareness of child rights***

Three in five children reported that they knew what rights children have and 46.3 per cent of the children thought that adults in their country respect children's rights. But the majority of children (45.5 per cent) didn't know about the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Further, it was observed that boys appeared to be more aware on all the three statements than girls, whilst children's awareness about their rights and the Convention increases as age increases. It is evident that there is a gap in terms of awareness among children of their rights and the existence of an international convention that provides a range of entitlements that are fundamental for their growth, development, protection and upholding their best interests, indicating that measures are required to address this.

### ***Variations in responses***

Significant gender variations in the level of satisfaction were observed for many aspects of life:

- Examples of positive responses more likely from girls than boys:
  - My parents/carers listen to me and take what I said into account
  - My parents/carers treat me fairly
  - Responses in relation to their friends
- Examples of activities more likely to be carried out by boys than girls:
  - Taking classes outside school time
  - Reading for fun
  - Playing sports

Statistically, significant differences in responses were observed by age group:

- Younger children appeared to respond positively:
  - Having a quiet place to study
  - My teachers treat me fairly
  - I feel safe at school
- Older children seemed to worry more than younger children in relation to the amount of money their families had.

More than one in ten children had low satisfaction with material possessions in Ethiopia; with their local area in South Africa and Germany; with their body in South Korea, the UK, Germany and Ethiopia; with their future in Nepal, South Africa and Ethiopia.

## Conclusions

The study has a potential for further research and in-depth more on the subjective wellbeing of children. This report only focused on descriptive analyses and further in country in-depth analysis and comparative analyses across countries will follow.

- The survey found that the majority of children were satisfied with most aspects of their lives.
- However, some children expressed their discontent with some aspects of life.
- Significant gender and age differences in satisfaction were observed for many aspects.
- There are also country differences in children's satisfaction level with various aspects of life.

## Recommendations

The report concludes with the following recommendations for future Children's Worlds surveys:

- Extend the number of countries involved in the surveys for greater comparison.
- Broaden the age group.
- Include explicit inclusion of marginalized groups.
- Gather data on longitudinal basis.

# Childhood Disability in Eastern Ethiopia

*Biftu Geda, Haramaya University and Addis Continental Institute of Public Health (ACIPH) Joint PhD Program*

## Introduction

Although disability is prevalent among children in Africa, official statistics are hard to come by, either because of a lack of reliable data or attempts to conceal the extent of the problem. Previous studies on childhood disability have found that the vast majority of children with disabilities are not recognised by national policymakers. Consequently they are completely cut off from health, education and other social services to which they should be entitled.

In Ethiopia, childhood disability is a major public health problem, yet little is known about the type and extent of childhood disability that prevails. This study assessed the incidence, types and severity of disability among 0–14-year-old children in rural Eastern Ethiopia. The author believes it is the first study to report such detailed data for the region.

## Methodology

The research was a cross-sectional community-based study among households that were under demographic and health surveillance in eastern Ethiopia. The study population consisted of all the children under surveillance aged between 0–14 years old. In total, 25,200 children across 38 kebeles in the Kersa woreda of the Oromia region were studied.

A structured questionnaire adapted from previous research was used to assess the type and severity of the disability. Screening questions were also adopted from UNICEF's 'Ten questions' and the Washington Group's 'Short Set' questions. The primary respondents were the biological mothers of the eligible children or the biological father or other adult guardian if the mothers were not available.

Twelve disabilities were examined including vision, hearing, sitting and standing, mobility, seizure, understanding others (listening and communicating), to be understood by others (speaking words that have meaning and which others can understand), speech, learning, object naming, mental retardation and mental health.

## Findings

21,572 of the 25,200 households (86.0 per cent) invited to the survey agreed to participate. Overall, 586 of the screened children aged (0–14) had a disability. Among the children with a disability, 132 had severe to very severe forms of disability.

Findings include:

- 179 (31.0 per cent) of the children had multiple disabilities. On average, the numbers of disabilities per child was about two and the contribution of hearing impairment was high – found in 417 children with multiple disabilities.
- The prevalence of disability increases as a child's age increases. For 200 of the children with a disability, the onset of the disability was during infancy.
- The magnitude of disability was higher among boys (335) than in girls (251). The prevalence of disability of all categories was higher among boys.
- 256 of the boys and 198 of the girls had a mild to moderate forms of disability whereas 79 boys and 53 girls had a severe to very severe forms of disability.
- Prevalence of childhood disability (CHD) was high among households with low socioeconomic status. Generally, the proportion of children with one or more disabilities was also higher in the lowest wealth quintile.
- Seizures were reported in 33 children.
- Hearing impairment was the most common type of disability reported (417). Of the children with a hearing disability, 171 had chronic ear discharge.
- Problems communicating, learning difficulties, visual impairment and hampered mobility were the four most common reported disabilities following hearing impairment.
- 105 children were found to have problems communicating while 89 had learning difficulties.
- Visual impairment was found in 81 children while 79 children had hampered mobility.

## Conclusions

The study found a relatively high proportion of children with disability in rural eastern Ethiopia. Hearing impairment was the major disability with an onset during infancy and associated with (potentially treatable) chronic ear infection.

Disability in this context may be attributed to poor access to healthcare and neonatal health services, lack of awareness about possible causes of disabilities, and the intervention of folk healers. In addition, poverty, fear of stigma, and lack of attention from health workers may also be associated drivers.

Communication, learning, vision and hampered mobility were common problems in this study and these findings are consistent with findings reported in other middle and low-income countries.

Findings from this study which suggest that the prevalence of disability increases as a child's age increases is consistent with other studies. On the other hand, the prevalence of severe to very severe forms of disabilities is higher than in the World Health Organization's report on disability of South East Asia and lower than the organization's report on Africa. This could be attributed to differences in response categories and census based reporting which did not follow standard data collection methods.

The study was conducted in an area where the majority of births are at home without proper medical provision. This may explain in part the high proportion of disabilities reported starting during the first year of life.

In this study, hearing impairment was the most commonly observed disability; this is consistent with previous reports. In developing countries, six in 1,000 live births are either born with a form of hearing impairment or develop this during the neonatal period. Such high prevalence of hearing disability could be due to chronic ear infections common in Ethiopia. A hearing disability developed during early childhood is likely to result in irreversible deficits in speech, linguistic, cognitive and educational development. Early detection and preventive measures coupled with timely and effective case management may prevent these.

Disability was common among households with a lower socioeconomic status, which is consistent with other studies both in developing and developed countries. However, the direction of association is being debated and whether poverty is a consequence of disability or vice versa needs further investigation.

The study was limited by the fact that no physical examinations were undertaken and disability classifications were entirely dependent on the assessments of the respondents. The use of proxy-reporters is likely to underestimate the prevalence of disability, due to reporting biases. The study was conducted in those villages where residents have been subject to continuous data collection, which may negatively affect their response because of fatigue and lack of incentives. An overall 14 per cent non-response may also indicate the taboo and stigma associated with disability in these communities. An attempt to minimize these biases was made by selecting biological mothers as the main source of information, by providing adequate training for interviewers, by setting a convenient time for the interviews and by providing full anonymity for respondents.

## **Recommendations**

Childhood disability is a major health challenge in Eastern Ethiopia. Permanent disability, especially hearing impairment, among children may be prevented by adequate care and early screening programmes as part of routine child health services.

Policy makers and NGOs should focus on:

- Strengthening institutional delivery of maternal and child care;
- Screening and early detection; and
- Further detail quantitative and qualitative research is recommended to generate more precise estimates and to identify parental challenges.

# Reintegration of Street Children and Community-based Child Protection in SNNPR, Ethiopia

*Lynette Kay, Retrak Ethiopia*

## Introduction

Retrak Ethiopia works with full-time street children to give them a proper alternative to life on the street. Retrak's records showed that a significant proportion of children met in Addis Ababa came from Ethiopia's southern region particularly from the town of Hossana and the surrounding area. As a result, a plan was developed to address some of the push factors that were leading many children to come to the city. With support from Cordaid, a three-year pilot community project was planned in the area (October 2012- September 2015), as well as support for reintegrating children into the area from Addis Ababa.

The presentation given to the Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) shared the results of a mid-term review of a pilot project and outlined some of the **project's major achievements over the past three years.**

## Project Objective

The long-term project objective is to improve the wellbeing, support and protection of 2,964 vulnerable children and increase the knowledge, abilities and wellbeing of 1,013 household caregivers and community members. The project works to prevent family separation and improve child protection by:

- Economic and social empowerment of poorest families;
- Improving children's awareness of trafficking and dangers of street life; and
- Improving community knowledge and responsibility for child well being and parenting.

In doing this, the project aims to change attitudes and behaviours, reduce stigma, and respond to and prevent further abuse and exploitation of children in target communities.

The work also comprises six sub-objectives:

1. Outreach and service provision to street children living unsupported on the streets in Addis Ababa and Hossana;
2. Participation of street children in education and life skills at drop-in centres in Addis Ababa and Hossana;
3. Reintegration of street children with their families in SNNPR, and support to caregivers;
4. Establishment of child-led Child Welfare Clubs (CWCs) with a focus on child protection issues;
5. Participation of vulnerable women in Self Help Groups (SHGs) leading to greater economic security and participation in family and community decision making; and
6. Community education to promote child protection.

### **Mid-term Review Methodology**

The mid-term review gathered information from on-going monitoring and dedicated activities involving beneficiaries and staff, in order to assess progress to date and generate learning for taking the project forward and for informing similar projects in other locations. The review took place 18 months into the project between June and July 2014. Monitoring was carried out using:

- Child Wellbeing Assessment at baseline and every six months
- Carer Wellbeing Assessment at baseline and every six months
- Economic Survey
- Community mapping of child protection mechanisms
- Most Significant Change Stories

### **Project Results**

According to the project's own assessment, achievements under the following headings include:

### ***Children returned and kept at home:***

- 355 mothers supported, who care for 1,557 vulnerable children
- Several mothers brought children home from exploitative labor or street life to return to school
- Three traffickers arrested

### ***Economic progress:***

- Savings average of 240 ETB (\$12) per SHG household
- 94 per cent of SHG members have plans to increase their income
- 25 per cent reported improved work skills

### ***Empowerment:***

- Women feel able to act for the benefit of their children
- Women beginning to advocate for policy change on community issues: one SHG wants to address poor sanitation in the community

### ***Further progress:***

- Further 30 children rescued from trafficking and returned to families
- SHGs have formed three Cluster Level Associations (six SHGs in each)

## **Mid-term Review Findings**

The review found that the project had been successfully implemented in the first two years. 471 children have been contacted on the streets, 447 have received services at drop-in centres in Addis Ababa and Hossana (newly established in May 2014), including education and life skills, and 160 have been reintegrated with their families in SNNPR. As a result, the wellbeing of children has improved dramatically, with an almost complete elimination of risk. Children's wellbeing when they are placed back in to the care of their family also improves overall.

A new community project has been established in Duna, Gibe and Soro woredas, where 355 women have joined 18 SHGs, over 2,000 children have participated in activities led by 11 CWCs and over 500 community members have received education through 17 workshops. Awareness raising activities focused on child trafficking, and specifically targeting bus

station workers and police, has led to over 90 children being rescued.

Well-being assessments of SHG members and their children in the community revealed they are at risk in several areas, however improvements have been achieved especially in the area of skills and work for caregivers and in parental care for children.

Through the SHGs, savings have reached an average of 230birr (\$12) per household and nearly all members have plans to increase their income.

Child protection issues have also been addressed through the CWCs which have used peer-to-peer activities to raise awareness of issues including: street life, child trafficking, education and work.

### **Review of Self Help Groups and Child Welfare Clubs**

The review of the SHGs by an independent assessor, project team and beneficiaries revealed that the approach is well adopted and accepted in these communities, leading to changes in women's lives and those of their children as already mentioned. The review of the CWCs with children, school staff and project team revealed that this approach has been harder to progress. Working through mentors in schools is difficult, especially when there is an expectation of per diems for activities to be completed. Frequent meetings must be pursued and alternative means of motivating mentors could be sought.

### **Review Recommendations**

The review provided an extensive number of recommendations, both for the project and similar initiatives. They include:

- Continue to hold discussions around parenting skills, child protection and child development, since these are clearly impacting the wellbeing of children;
- Work with the SHGs and CDWs to improve the practice of rotational leadership, thus allowing as many women as a possible the opportunity to build up their leadership skills;
- Continue to support SHGs to think about individual and group income generating activities, as well as encouraging them to look for opportunities for community social change projects, especially as the CLAs develop;

- Continue to work with out-of-school children through football clubs and ensure these activities are adequately monitored; and
- Continue to provide community education activities with the aim of enabling implementation of child protection policies. This should continue to include a focus on trafficking and the work in this area needs to be specifically monitored.

The success of the project lends itself to replication and scale up, within Ethiopia and beyond. Among other things, consideration should be given to:

- The culture of dependency in any future locations, building on lessons learnt about how to deal with this;
- Establishing clear monitoring and evaluation procedures, so that staff members are trained in these during their induction, and they can run from day one and be used to collect baseline information; and
- Begin to plan for phase out of this project to ensure sustainability of the SHGs and any other activities.

# Magnitude of Child Marriage and Associated Factors in Kelela Woreda, Amhara Region, North Ethiopia

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## Introduction

Child marriage has physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, reducing educational opportunities and the chance for personal growth for both boys and girls. It undermines global efforts on poverty alleviation, universal access to education and reproductive health. It also slows attempts to reduce the incidence of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity.

In Ethiopia, marriage is highly valued by society. Many rural Ethiopians believe that a girl who is not married by late adolescence represents a failure and disgrace to the family. As a result, girls and young women experience huge social pressure to get married early.

The objective of this study was to assess the magnitude of child marriage and associated factors among young women and girls under the age of 25 who had married in the last five years. The study took place in Kelala woreda, South Wollo Zone in the Amhara Region of North East Ethiopia where child marriage is considered appropriate, socially accepted, and formally recognised.

## Methodology

The study was a community-based cross-sectional design supplemented by qualitative research methods. 428 study subjects were identified (94 per cent response rate), and selected using the systematic random sampling. Data was collected using individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs). A literature review was used to support the findings.

## Findings

- 60 per cent of respondents had married below the age of 18 years old; and
- 12 per cent were adolescents aged between 10-14 years and 83 per cent between 15-19 years old.

The study identified a number of socio-cultural factors that lead to early marriage. They include:

- 60 per cent of respondents whose age at first marriage less than 18 were out of school. Reasons for non-attendance included marriage (98 per cent) followed by lack of family capacity to educate their children (15 per cent).
- According to the respondents' view on child marriage by community, 69 per cent supported the practice of child marriage while 23 per cent opposed it.
- The qualitative data collected from parents participating in the FGD and the key informants suggests that the prevalence and magnitude of the practice of child marriage is declining because of relatively better community awareness on the consequences of child marriage, the fear of penalties on an arranged child marriage, and its subsequent cancellation.
- Women and men FGD participants also cited religion as a reason for child marriage.
- Despite government policy and legislations, family persist in marrying off their daughters at night in the name of feasts and hidden traditional ceremonies.

Marriage for economic reasons was also found to be a contributory factor:

- 56 per cent of women whose age at first marriage less than 18 years old mentioned economic reasons behind the practice of child marriage.
- The desire to get dowry (in the form of money, land and cattle) were also cited as economic motivations.

## Conclusion

Child marriage is highly prevalent in the study woreda. Traditional practices, religion, and wealth status were found to be major drivers of early marriage. Despite efforts by the government to curb the practice, it has continued in various guises including abduction, feasts and secret ceremonies.

Child marriage is a well-accepted and common practice in the studied communities. Participants confirmed that child marriage is still widely carried out, and agreed that in order for it to stop, greater work with parents, religious leaders, victims, law enforcing bodies and leaders, young girls and boys is needed.

## Recommendations

- Engage in community conversations and community mobilization against child marriage focusing on community leaders, family, elders, and young girls and boys.
- Strengthen the capacity of young people to decide who and when to marry through training. Establish and strengthen youth friendly services in the health facilities.
- Provide economic opportunities through micro credit, saving and skill trainings which provide an alternative source of income.
- Advocate against child marriage – engage with regional government actors in the women, justice, and health sectors. Encourage government departments to tackle child marriage as part of their programmes and strengthen the national plan of action on child marriage and the enforcement of related laws.
- Raise awareness of duty bearers and right holders on the harmful effects of child marriage practices and provision of alternative economic opportunities.

## About the Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF)

The need for a link between research, policy and practice on the issues of children in Ethiopia resulted in the establishment of a Forum through which practitioners, policy makers and researchers come together to discuss research findings to improve practices and provide inputs for policy design and implementation.

The idea was proposed during a consultative workshop, organized by Young Lives, for preparing a study on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Workshop participants raised the concern that research on all aspects of children's lives was often not shared and made easily available so that it can be useful for practitioners and policy makers. The idea was further developed through a series of discussions and consultations with Young Lives' partners, leading to the establishment of the CRPF.

The CRPF now has a coordinator hosted by Young Lives and an 13 member Steering Committee composed of representatives from the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), CHAD-ET, Concern World Wide, Consortium of Christian Development Associations (CCRDA), Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE), Norwegian Church Aid, Oak Foundation, Plan Ethiopia, Save the Children UK, UNICEF, and Young Lives. It also holds constructive dialogues with

the Ministries of Education, Health, Justice, and Culture and Tourism, and representatives from these Ministries have been attending the Forum and contributing greatly.

The overall goal of CRPF is to create a stronger connection among research, policy and programmes related to children in Ethiopia. It has also the following specific objectives:

- 1) Communicate new research from Ethiopia, the region and globally and other new documents related to children to a wide audience;
- 2) Promote the usage of existing (online and physical) resource centers;
- 3) Facilitate dialogue and consultation among researchers, policy makers and practitioners working on children's issues; and
- 4) Provide practitioners with the skills to use research to strengthen their programmes for children.

To this end, it has launched a monthly seminar series, which is conducted every last Thursday of each month at MoWCA. The monthly seminars are always open to policy makers, researchers, practitioners and any other interested individuals to participate both as presenters and participants. Anyone interested is most welcome!

### Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF)

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