

CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR VULNERABLE GIRLS 2018

Background

Unemployment, migration and economic hardship are important and impactful issues that many Ethiopians are faced with. According to the 2016 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the FDRE, current employment among women age 15-49 increased from 29% in 2005 to 38% in 2011 but decreased to 33% in 2016. Additionally, unemployment is greater in females than men which poses further economic and social problems. Further, urban women are much more likely than rural women to be employed (52% versus 28%). Due to the recent rapid urbanisation, Addis Ababa largely consists of migrants from other regions in Ethiopia where 60% of the migrants are youth and 2/3 are female (ETMUS 2008).

As a consequence of this high migration rates of youth and females and high unemployment, child prostitution becomes a large issue. Having risen to 20,000 child prostitutes in the last five years only in Addis Ababa, not including the undocumented child sexual abuse, studies have found estimates of 150,000- 200,000 child prostitutes working across the country. Baseline surveys conducted by USAID in 2009 show that most youth entered sex work after domestic work such as waitressing (37%) and due to negative life events such as divorce (29%), trauma at work (39%), death of a parent (22%), along with general economic struggles.



The survey also found that 71% of sex workers are aged 15-24 and are poorly educated, with only 33% having ever attended school and 36% having less than 7 years minimum of basic education. Lack of education and a rural background has been correlated to a lack of an ability in negotiating safe sexual relations and asking partners to wear condoms (EDHS 2016). While 90% of Ethiopian women with more than secondary education feel justified in asking that a partner with an STI use a condom, only 47% of women with no education believe the same. While condom use during instances of paid sex increased from 30% in 2011 to 81% in 2016, paid sex still has a significant multiplier effect on communities and societies. HIV/AIDS and STD transmission, violence against women, crime, and human trafficking continues to increase and has worsened for sex workers

Ethiopian culture rejects open discussions about sexual experiences and practises with children. This hinders sexual education and unsafe sexual practises are kept in the dark which results in many youth being unaware, unhealthy and helpless. Due to child-rearing practises, peer-group influence, broken homes and the structure of an extended family, children face resource shortage competing with their siblings for their low family income. Consequently, many youth become desperate and reside to sex work to sustain themselves and their family financially. It is also documented that youth turn to sex work to finance their education as their family is financially incapable.

Further push factors for youth entering commercial sexual work include premarital sex leading to an unwanted pregnancy, harmful cultural norms, family disintegration and inappropriate education opportunities.

In Addis Ababa, young women migrants who are forced into prostitution due to the above reasons move to areas around the national bus station at Merkato where there are red light areas. Kirkos sub city in Addis Ababa is the main target area of this project to help combat the struggles of many young sex workers.

The objective of this project is to create a safe environment for venerable girls in the Kirkos sub city of Addis Ababa. Specifically, this project is to firstly increase access to psychosocial support and create economic resilience for 40 girls at risk and affected by prostitution by providing these girls with alternative means of income. Secondly, create economic resilience for 40 households affected by the prostitution. Thirdly, to increase awareness of 550 community member about the problems that migrated girls face. These objectives have been achieved by training the 40 girls and 40 mothers in practical business skills to use their seed capital efficiently and educating 550 community members about the issues faced by migrated youth in Addis Ababa. The strategies for this project include raised community group awareness discussion sessions; providing life and facilitation skill training for these community members; organising peer to peer and community based discussions; enabling community groups through skill building training; providing seed capital; and linking the community structure with existing health systems to acquire appropriate health services.

Accomplishments of the project

Ensuring Optimum effectiveness of the project

Firstly, the signing of the project agreement with Kirkos sub city Finance and Economic Development office and the Women and Children Office helped Hiwot establish close relationships with government partners and communities. This benefited the project as it helped create better implementation of project activities at grass root level and monitor project progress.

Furthermore, a project familiarisation workshop day was held to discuss project objectives, expected outcomes, budget and disseminate roles of Hiwot staff and government partners. Community groups were also identified to distribute roles and responsibilities. Lastly, beneficiaries were identified based on a specific selection criteria to avoid bias selection. Preliminary assessments were conducted on multiple woreda women and children offices along with door to door visits and discussions held with community and government partner offices. Finally, 140 individuals including girls, youth groups, parents and community member were chosen to be in the direct beneficiary of the project.

Training for community groups and peer to peer discussions

Community groups and training for peer to peer facilitation skills were used effectively to disseminate information to raise awareness and develop skills on issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), STIs, parenting skills, alternative child disciplining measures and issues affecting girls at community level. Community groups involved 40 individuals (11 males and 29 females) in Woreda 9 and 10 in Kirkos within three days and the peer to peer facilitation skills training involved 40 individuals including 22 boys and 18 girls at the same location. These 80 individuals said they became more aware, are motivated to spread the message, and create positive community change with 40 of them being able to lead successful peer to peer discussions with sufficient knowledge and skills. Furthermore, refreshment training was given to strengthen and ensure sustainability of the peer to peer and community group discussion. It was given to 60 individuals (20 male and 40 females). As a result, up to date information and facilitation skills were provide to the participants to lead and manage the peer and group discussions effectively and appropriately.



Community and peer discussions

Community discussions proves to be one of the most effective mechanisms to raise awareness and discuss issues relating to the causes of problems and identifying reasonable solutions regarding HIV/AIDS, STI prevention and SRH hazards faced by young girls. With a total of 765 participants (123 male and 642 female) in the community discussion guided by manuals provided by Hiwot, participants successfully identified poverty, school dropouts, lack of parent to child communication about SRH, STIs and HIV/AIDS, and commercial sex work as prevailing challenges of the community in Kirkos. These identified issues have motivated participants to commit to addressing and solving these issues faced by young women with the support of Hiwot staff and government offices.

Peer discussion created awareness on the health issues regarding SRH, STIs and HIV/AIDS to the target groups including 318 youth (176 boys and 142 girls) in the span of 16 sessions. Participants shared information on SRH, STIs and HIV/AIDS and other factors impacting children and youth in the community. Furthermore, with thorough discussions, these youth said to be committed to support vulnerable girls in need of social help.

Business development training for mothers and young girls

As economic insufficiency is a major concern for mothers which often result in their children becoming vulnerable and entering commercial sex work, Hiwot has implemented business development skill training for 30 mothers. Also, Hiwot organised business training for 30 young girls (commercial sex workers) to increase their psychosocial support and as a form of economic empowerment. Four days were organised to train mothers and three to train young girls in enhancing their business management skills in order to earn better incomes by developing better business skills and managing their income generating activities. Seed money was also deposited in each of the trainees accounts including 7333 ETB at the Addis Saving and Credit Institution S.C.. The money was distributed in two rounds with effective monitoring of their business progress. Their businesses mainly included making "Injera" and bread, selling cloth and fruit, and other types of small businesses. The advantage of this seed money account is to encourage the beneficiaries to practise saving for their daily income and receive extra credit from the institution.

Furthermore, four self-help groups were organised, two in each woreda in order to sustain and support the members to expand and develop their businesses. Each self-help group elected a group chairman, secretary and treasury of the 15 member group. Each group created a common fund by contributing small savings on a regular basis and opened up a group saving bank account where each group deposited 1500 ETB accounting to 1000ETB per person. Each self-help group was appropriately monitored and provided with technical support from the woreda level of Small and Micro Business Coordination office.



School material support

Hiwot has successfully provided the target woredas of 9 and 1 in the Kirkos sub city with educational materials such as exercise books to 30 children. These materials have helped support mothers with the financial burden of educating their children as well as improve the vulnerabilities of children in becoming forced into sex work.



True Stories

Although Hiwot had many difficulties in convincing many women to leave commercial sexual work due to other income generating activities having a lower wage, there has been many success stories.

"My life will go on the right direction"

"I am Birekabush Seyfe and I lived at woreda 9 of Kirkos sub city. I received the financial support and skill training on how to make business. After I received the business development, I received 8,333.33 for IGA program and started making [to start] my business. Now, I am making coffee and tea. Though I received the budget lately, I am doing better, but in the near future my life will go on the right direction."

"I will have a bright future" and "a the glimpse of hope"

Belaynesh Tesfaye (BT) is a 30 years old women who has a son. Belaynesh is living at woreda 9 of Kirkos sub city. BT she has among the income generating activity (IGA) beneficiaries and since she received the support she is making "Kolo" and selling for the community. As she pointed out "After I received the support from Hiwot Ethiopia, I have started my own business and better income from it. By this profit, I can pay house rent and feeding my children without any difficulties. I hope that, in the coming I have a bright future."



"I will be there!"

Her name is Nardos Werku. She is a 24 years old women living in Kirkos sub-city of woreda 9. She has been working as commercial sex worker for the last 3 years and due to this she was in a difficult situation and facing different challenges. Now, she is one of the beneficiaries and supported by the project implemented by Hiwot Ethiopia. Nardos received seed money as a business startup capital and she is baking "Injera" and bread as a business. Nardos said that, "It is a short time since I have started my business and it is difficult for getting a profit within short time. Though, I am struggling to change my life and escaping from this appalling life, I hope I will achieve my vision and be there with the support of Hiwot Ethiopia,"

"I am Mekdes Sefiraye and 24 years old. I am living at woreda 10 of Kirkos sub-city. I am working as commercial sex workers for the last three years and passing through a tough life, because working as commercial sex worker by it is a silent killer. I was always thinking a lot of ways to get out of this difficult life. Thanks to Hiwot Ethiopia, I have got an opportunity to be one of the benefiter of the project.

Together with other colleagues who are in the same situation, we received trainings on business development and life skill including HIV/AIDS and STIs. Then after, I received a total of 8,333.33 ETB in two rounds to start and expand my own business. Now, I am doing a business by opening mini-supermarket at my home and making local "bread" and "Shiro" and distributing for the community. Thanks to God, Hiwot Ethiopia and woreda 10 women and children affairs office for giving me such opportunity".