



Editor's Note

Dear readers,

We are pleased to welcome you to the December 2021 CRPF quarterly newsletter. This edition presents three summaries of research presented at the monthly CRPF seminars. These are from papers on, 1) Children's and adults' views about education and migration among the Argobbas in North-Eastern Ethiopia, 2) The Impact of Climate Change on Adolescents' Access to Education in Ethiopia, and 3) CARE's fight against early marriage: The case of Abdiboru Project. It also addresses the policy brief published on the impact of COVID-19 in Ethiopia, different research organizations produced jointly under the Building Resilience in Ethiopia (BRE) programme.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions. For more information, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com or 011 1 540121.



Research organisations jointly produced policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 in Ethiopia

A Policy brief has been jointly produced under BRE (Building Resilience in Ethiopia) programme including research by the following organizations: Addis Ababa University, GAGE, International Food Policy Research Institute, Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE), Oxford Policy Management, World Bank Group, and Young Lives.

The Policy brief synthesises evidence from seven leading studies, providing an overview of COVID-19 impacts on the Ethiopian population overall, but also zooming in to specific regions, sectors, and population groups. Many of the studies are longitudinal, and thus offer a perspective on the evolving COVID-19 impacts over time. The highlighted results provide a view of how COVID-19 continues to unfold throughout different sections of Ethiopian society. Each study reveals policy gaps and discusses where policy areas could be strengthened to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19.

The policy brief is available on the Young Lives Ethiopia website. <https://younglives-ethiopia.org/node/1011>



Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

Children's and adults' views about education and migration among the Argobbas in North-Eastern Ethiopia Anannia Admassu (Phd.)

Introduction

The study sought to explore perceptions and practices of childhood, migration and education among the Argobba communities in north-east Ethiopia. The Argobbas are one of the ethnic groups in Ethiopia who live in unique village settlement patterns in the north-eastern part of the Amhara Regional State. Although they were later dispersed into the eastern and south-eastern part of the country, Argobba Woreda and the villages in Shonke and Teleha located in north-east Ethiopia are recognised as places that represent the historical and cultural heritage of the Argobbas.

The author's initial thoughts to undertake this research on the situation of migrant children grew from the observations of many children who were migrating from the rural parts of the Amhara region to the town of Kombolcha where the NGO (Children Aid Ethiopia) CHADET was implementing projects to support vulnerable children. According to the assessments made on the migratory processes of children and young persons in the area, children migrate from nearby and distant locations, including Argobba, to the towns of Kombolcha, Dessie and other urban centres within and out of Debub Wollo Administrative Zone.

Given the remoteness of the location of Argobba, and the value that they attach to their ethnic identity and cultural distinctiveness, the researcher sought to understand in more detail what motivates children to migrate and the perceptions and practices of children and adults towards migration and education.

Despite the continued recognition of contextual variations and the socially constructed forms of childhoods, and the growth in researching the life worlds of children in the global south, very little is yet known about the ways these social constructions have been constituted and practically experienced among communities who attach high value to maintaining their traditions and ethnic identity, such as the Argobbas.

Hence, this research intended to understand how children and adults perceive the influence of the changing cultural context and globalisation and the extent to which local practices are affected.

Methodology

The study was based on qualitative research adopting a philosophical principle of constructivism, which assumes that knowledge is constructed through interaction being made between participants of the research and the researcher.

The field work took place between July 2017 and May 2018.

Conclusions

Factors that impede children's education in the context of Argobba:

- 1) Children's work,
- 2) Parental attitudes towards modern education,
- 3) Sociocultural practices and
- 4) Religious education

Drivers behind young people's decisions to migrate:

- 1) looking for better economic opportunities,
- 2) moving out of the rural way of life
- 3) social and cultural practices (e.g., marriage)

The influence of globalisation, change and transformation:

- Improvements in transport and communication have paved the way for intensification of the migration of children and young persons in search of job opportunities, particularly to the oil-rich countries and created consciousness among communities in distant locations such as the Argobbas.

- Improvements in the use of media and technology: interconnectedness of the community with other parts of the world, enhanced consciousness and beliefs about the good life, about the places where the migrants lived and about other cultures, displaying images via smartphones.

Inhospitable climatic conditions and limited opportunities in rural areas

- agricultural productivity is very low, meaning that the supply of food aid is a necessity, scarcity of water (even civil servants lose interest in being assigned to the schools and health posts located in rural villages);

- along with the growth in the population shortage of arable land in the relatively flat fields;

- Giving less value to the rural way of life and using education and migration as a vehicle out of poverty. This is similar to findings of other studies conducted in the global south on children's educational aspirations.

Perspectives of adults

- Adults imagine about their past as the basis of their identity; e.g. the effort to revive their language,
- The issue of identity (being an Argobba) is highly valued – especially in government structures
- Worry about children failing to meet expectations of the traditions of the Argobbas (concern about the impact of globalization, especially the media in influencing the behavior and practice of children and young people that may compromise the maintenance of Argobba culture),
- Parents recognized that changes are being observed over time (children taking decisions without parental consent)
- They do not consider education as something that can get children and themselves out of poverty,
- Competing choices between modern and religious schools (reluctance about modern education and preferences for religious education)
- Sociocultural and economic challenges influence the educational performance of children (such as marriage)
- Children have got better access to obtaining information and discover about life out of the context they are living in (influence of globalization).
- Children and young people have to some extent been influenced by Western culture (movies, games, dressing style, premier league soccer, etc.) that were not common practice in the recent past,
- The provision of ‘self- administration’ might have advantages to a limited extent (e.g., serving as an instrument for obtaining access to employment for some members the ethnic group; limitations in budget allocations, etc.) but this made no significant impact on the lives of children and young people over the past years;
- This has, therefore, changed the author’s assumptions and stands point with regard to how development programs, e.g. modern education, cannot result in significant progress through a top-down approach.

Implications for policy and practice

On children’s wellbeing

Despite international and regional policy instruments, constitutional provisions, legislations and policy directives, this research found a gap between promises and reality. Hence, the general wellbeing of children and their access to basic services remained limited. Given the complexities of the challenges that children encountered in Argobba, interventions by government are crucial to educate community leaders to widen the space for children’s voices to be heard and their rights protected from violence.

On children’s education

Studies conducted by Young Lives in four countries, including Ethiopia, indicate that the poorest children living in rural areas, whose parents are the least educated and belong to ethnic, language or religious minority groups, perform less well in their education than do their peers in urban areas (Boyden et al. 2019). Hence, a supportive environment is necessary for children to succeed in their education.

This research suggests that children’s educational aspirations can only be realised through employing an approach that encourages by children engaging adults in a position of power to allow a co-construction that can inform transformational change at individual, organisational and societal levels. Such an approach can encourage dialogue, rather than expects families and other community members to play a passive role, and can allow them to reflect on the complex issues that underpin the challenges of children’s education with the possibility of recalibrating it towards ways that children can benefit from it. Moreover, this approach creates an opportunity for communities to explore social and other forms of realities associated with the changing socioeconomic and political landscape. This is particularly useful, as it would bring together policymakers and implementers to help communities explore and deepen their critical awareness and ownership of their realities and to act together by assuming reciprocal duties and responsibilities.



Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

The Impact of Climate Change on Adolescents' Access to Education in Ethiopia Workneh Abebe

Background context: climate change and adolescents

Climate-related hazards impact children and adolescents in different ways at different points of their lives. Children under five are more likely to be impacted by poor nutrition and suffer from diarrhoea, whereas adolescents are more likely to be impacted by disruptions to education or income-generation activities. It is therefore important to consider the whole life course of adolescents, focusing on longer-term climate impacts on their development.

The intersection between gender inequality and age vulnerabilities heightens adolescent girls' risks from adverse climate impacts. Women, children and youth are recognised to be most at risk from the impacts of climate-related hazards; however, there are significant gaps within the current data due to a lack of disaggregation and visibility of minority and marginalised groups. Climate-induced displacement and conflict can put girls at increased risk of sexual violence, while household stressors, as a result of climate events such as drought, can increase rates of domestic violence. Additionally, climate-related shocks can amplify girls' risk of dropping out of school and can disrupt access to sexual and reproductive health facilities and services. Although boys also experience climate-related impacts on health and food security, among others the gender-specific impacts on boys are largely absent from the literature.

Adolescent voices are critical in identifying key age specific risks and experiences in relation to climate change, particularly highlighting challenges or providing solutions that adults may overlook. A growing number of analysts highlight that adolescents' experiences, and their agency to contribute to adaptation methods, must be taken into account when designing policies and programming, whilst recognising the importance of ensuring this is voluntary in order to not place additional burdens on young people.

While the Paris Climate Agreement overview highlights the need to 'change, respect, promote and consider...the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations... as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity' (United Nations (UN), 2015: 2), age and gender considerations are not present in any of the 29 articles. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on climate action also highlights the importance of 'focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities'; however, its indicators are not disaggregated by gender or age. As a result, the specific needs of adolescents, as well as the gendered implications of climate change, are often invisible to policy-makers and programme implementers.

Methodology

Gage has employed a mixed-methods research and impact evaluation design, including:

Quantitative survey

- Surveys with adolescent girls and boys aged 10-12 and 15-17
- Surveys with their female and male caregivers
- Surveys with community leaders and school personnel

Qualitative research

- In-depth interviews with nodal adolescents, their siblings, caregivers and community leaders
- Key informant interviews and historical process tracing
- Policy and legal analysis to understand the politics of policy and programme implementation

Annual participatory research

- Peer research and participatory photography with nodal adolescents and their peer networks to better pinpoint shifts in adolescent capabilities over time
- Social networking analysis to understand the evolving influence of peer groups throughout adolescence

Findings

Direct Impacts

- Climate change is expected to increase rates of drought and locust outbreaks. As Ethiopia is highly reliant on agriculture this has large impacts on poverty and food insecurity.
- Due to drought-induced crop failure, some families have no other choice but to turn to charcoal production as an alternative livelihood source, which can result in further deforestation.
- Changing weather patterns can directly influence water availability; girls are more impacted by this due to gender norms that mean girls are usually responsible for water collection. This has a direct impact on their educational attendance and performance.

Indirect Impacts

Education: Poverty and food insecurity as a result of climate-shocks such as drought can lead to school drop-out and impact learning outcomes.

- Droughts can cause high rates of seasonal migration (in Afar) and increase time spent collecting water (mainly impacting girls) due to water scarcity - all of which can impact school attendance.

Conflict and migration: Climate shocks such as drought have resulted in increased migration as a coping strategy, resulting in longer periods of school absenteeism or drop out.

- The study found high rates of migration from Oromia region to Somali region to find alternative work to agriculture, with many reporting that during migration children are out of school due to language differences.
- In Afar migration to more fertile land is common; this can cause conflict between Amhara communities and Afar pastoralist when they migrate to each other’s land; adolescents talked about periods of protracted absenteeism from school as a result.
- Significant ethnic violence has occurred between Somali and Oromia regions of Ethiopia - resource scarcity may have contributed to tensions and conflict in the region as populations clash over access to fertile land and water sources.

Violence: Climate change can put some adolescents (particularly girls) at increased risk of violence, which in turn impacts on their education due to absenteeism and ability to spend time on homework.

- Due to a lack of water, conflict can arise at water sources. Adolescent girls are also put at increased risk of sexual violence when travelling further distances to collect water.

Psychosocial: Strong psychosocial impacts of the changing climate in Afar affecting future opportunities

- This is due to communities’ strong reliance on the climate for their households’ livelihoods. Many adolescents were worried and stressed about the impacts of drought on their future livelihoods and in turn their ability to stay in school.

Recommendations

- Ensure that children and young people’s unique perspectives and experiences inform climate change adaptation strategies, especially through informing adolescents about climate change risks and mitigation measures in school and encouraging girls’ active participation in community dialogues (SDG4, SDG5).

- Scale up access to age- and gender-responsive social protection to support adolescents and their caregivers who are vulnerable to climate-related shocks (SGD1, SDG2, SG4, and SDG 10).
- Strengthen health and WASH facilities to respond to changing disease patterns induced by climate change and ensure psychosocial services are adapted to climate realities (SDG3, SDG4 SDG6).
- Expand potable water points in rural areas to reduce long hours travel and staying at water points, which will have a positive impact on girls’ education, and reduce violence.
- Address climate stressors in order to mitigate an important driver of intra-household and community-level violence (SDG5, SDG16).
- Strengthening and expanding the ‘Green Legacy’ project may be instrumental in mitigating the stressors such as drought, flooding, etc.



Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

CARE’s fight against early marriage: The case of Abdiboru Project Serkadis Admasu

Background

Child marriage is widely acknowledged to be a harmful sociocultural practice that is both a cause and an outcome of human rights violations that lead to poor adolescents’ reproductive health. Girls married at an early age are more likely to be subjected to human rights violations; which means it can be a cause for human rights violation. Child marriage leads adolescent girls to have less chance of getting or continuing in education and less autonomy in the household and high chance of economic dependence. Ethiopia is one of the Sub-Saharan country in which child marriage is practiced widely despite the law strictly forbidding it. According to the 2011 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS), the median age at which Ethiopian women marry is 16.5 years,

and 40% of all women in their early 20s were married before they turned 18 years of age. Men of the same age, on the other hand, were very unlikely to marry as children. Indeed, women are more likely to be married by the age of 18 than men are by the age of 25 years.

A report from a study conducted among women aged 20-24 years in nine major regions of Ethiopia in 2009 to 2010 have shown that 16.5 % the women were married before the age of 15 years. The majority, 89%, of these marriages were arranged and about 71% of the brides met their husbands for the first time on the day of their wedding. Further analysis of EDHS 2011 data has shown that 59% of women in the age group of 20 to 29 years reported being married before the age of 17 years while 19% were married before the age of 14 years.

The Abdiboru Project

The project is a 5-year (2016 – 2020) intervention initiative focusing on girls aged 10-14. The ultimate aim of the project is to establish a cost effective model that can be applied at scale. In order to achieve this goal, the project focuses on ensuring adolescent girls have the agency to control decisions that affect their own lives and influence the local, regional and national development agenda, improving the accountability and support to adolescent girls by the government's local and district health, education and women, youth and children affairs offices, and strengthening social and cultural norms and values that protect and prevent discrimination against adolescent girls.

Methods

The study was conducted in four districts (Chiro, Mesela, Boke and Doba) of West Hararghe zone, Oromia Regional State. Based on the 2007 Census conducted in West Hararghe Zone, women and girls account for 48.8% of the population. The majority of the population resides in the rural areas (91%), livelihood was dependent on agriculture related activities (85%), and Islam is the major religion (88%). The study woredas were selected in consultation with CARE Ethiopia based on programmatic and evaluations needs of the project. The baseline qualitative study employed Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs), In-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) to collect relevant information to address the purpose of the project from March 20, 2016 to April 02, 2016.

Findings

- Most girls marry even at an early age not to disappoint their friends/peers, and waste their chances and to avoid the prospect of not finding another husband/a second chance.
- Adolescent girls are expected to get married even if it requires them to stop going to school.
- By age 15 years, adolescent girls are expected to accept a marriage proposal and get married.
- Mothers are expected to support/advise their daughter to accept a marriage if she is 15 years of age.
- Mothers are expected to marry their daughters off when there is a marriage proposal if the suitor is capable of taking care of the family.
- If a girl refuses to marry, she would be considered 'lazy', 'foolish' or 'useless'; she would be insulted and disgrace her mother who could not persuade her to accept the marriage proposal.
- If a girl refuses a marriage proposal, she could be forced into marriage by abduction.
- Mothers would be blamed or disgraced by friends, neighbours and the community for not convincing their daughters to marry and for not conforming to the marriage norms and culture of the community.
- Most girls would be psychologically hurt from the criticism and insults from friends/peers and thus could change their decision and accept marriage.
- Girls can refuse marriage proposal if they are strong to continue their education and if they could mobilize support from school, notably from their teachers, to convince their parents.

Recommendations

- Relationships between structure and social norms holders are intertwined and require well-thought engagement strategies to strengthen collaboration and cooperation between the parties.
- Integrating and mainstreaming Abdiboru like projects with the government development programs can benefit from achieving project goals at scale.
- Girls need to be provided with comprehensive education, counseling and support to prevent early marriage.
- Agency is beneficial if it includes internally driven motivations that inspire girls positively including establishing core values and future aspirations in order to overcome undue external influences including peers and brokers.
- Empowering girls economically and with essential life skills are critical measures to help them aspire bigger goals.
- Improving the quality of education is critical for girls' success and independence.
- A holistic cross-sectoral approach of agency, social norm and institutional change is most likely to be effective to tackle early and forced marriage.
- Adolescents who are not supported to develop as independent rational decision-making persons and who are simply liberated from the umbrella of parental protection and guidance may fall victim to early marriages.



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