CYW-RPF
Children, Youth and Women Research and Practice Forum

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present our March 2025 edition, featuring summaries of two key research studies: *Situational Analysis and Policy Gap Assessment on Young Care Leavers in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa University) and *Supplementary Scoping Study on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls in Addis Ababa* (UN Women).

This issue also commemorates CYW-RPF's 15th anniversary, marked by our Annual Workshop on "Protection and Empowerment of Children, Youth, and Women" on February 11, organized by Young Lives Ethiopia, UNICEF, UN Women, MoWSA, and FCDO.

We welcome your feedback and contributions. For inquiries, contact us at crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com or +251 11 154 0121.

CYW-RPF Marks 15 Years with Landmark Workshop on Children, Youth and Women

The 15th-anniversary workshop of the Children, Youth, and Women - Research and Practice Forum (CYW-RPF) took place in Addis Ababa on February 11, 2025. The event featured keynote addresses by H.E. Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs, Dr. Aboubakar Kampo, UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia, and Mr. Schadrack Dusabe, UN Women Deputy Representative in Ethiopia. Dr. Alula Pankhurst, Country Director of Young Lives Ethiopia, delivered the welcoming address.

The workshop showcased 14 research presentations across plenary and parallel sessions focusing on Violence Against Children, Empowerment, and Vulnerability. Supported by MoWSA, UN Women, UNICEF, FCDO, and Young Lives, the event highlighted evidence-based approaches to critical social issues.

Since 2010, CYW-RPF has convened monthly seminars, every last Thursday, at the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and online, fostering dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and development partners. Over the years, it has hosted 171 presentations on key topics like migration, education, violence, and child labor, etc with 30 drawing on Young Lives' longitudinal research on poverty and inequality. Also, the Forum has produced 32 newsletters and 13 annual research summaries, all available on the Young Lives Ethiopia website. https://bit.ly/3JVVQpL

Watch the workshop recording on YouTube: https://bit.ly/4hKitvp

Research Summaries from CYW-RPF presentations

Policy Gap Assessment and Situational Analysis on Young Care Leavers in Ethiopia

Messay Gebremariam (PhD)

Introduction

The issue of young care leavers (YCLs) in Ethiopia is a critical yet under-researched area within the broader context of child welfare and social development. Care leavers are individuals who transition out of institutional care or foster care systems, typically upon reaching the age of majority (18 years in Ethiopia). This transition is often fraught with challenges, including limited access to education, employment, housing, and social support. In Ethiopia, where over 5.6 million orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) reside, the situation is particularly dire. Many of these children are placed in institutional care due to factors such as poverty, disease (e.g., HIV/AIDS), conflict, and trafficking. However, the traditional systems of care, which rely heavily on extended family and community support, are increasingly under stress, leaving many children to fend for themselves on the streets or in child-headed households.

Despite the growing number of care leavers in Ethiopia, there is a significant lack of research, policy, and support systems tailored to their needs. Existing policies, such as the Alternative Childcare Guidelines (2009) and the National Child Policy (2017), do not adequately address the specific challenges faced by care leavers. Moreover, the process of leaving care is often abrupt, with little preparation or support provided to young people as they transition to independence. This research aims to fill this gap by conducting a situational analysis and policy gap assessment on young care leavers in Ethiopia, with the goal of identifying key challenges and proposing actionable recommendations to improve their outcomes.

Methodology

This research utilizes a combination of qualitative and systematic review approaches. The qualitative analysis draws on interviews and focus group discussions with care leavers, caregivers, and key informants, providing firsthand insights into the challenges faced by YCLs. The systematic review examines existing policy documents, including the Ethiopian National Guidelines for Alternative Childcare (2009), the National Youth Policy (2004), and the National Child Policy (2017), to evaluate their effectiveness in supporting care leavers. Additionally, comparative analysis with international best practices is used to identify areas for improvement.

Key Findings

The research identified several key challenges faced by young care leavers in Ethiopia, including:

▸ **Socio-economic Challenges**: Care leavers in Ethiopia face high levels of unemployment, financial and material poverty, and homelessness. Many lack the necessary skills and qualifications to secure stable employment, leading to underemployment or unemployment. This economic instability often results in a cycle of poverty, making it difficult for care leavers to achieve self-sufficiency.

▸ **Psychological and Social Challenges**: Care leavers are at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The lack of social support networks exacerbates these issues, leaving many care leavers feeling isolated and disconnected from their communities. Additionally, care leavers are more likely to experience early death, teenage pregnancy, and involvement in criminal activities.

▸ **Policy and Institutional Gaps**: Existing policies and guidelines in Ethiopia do not adequately address the needs of care leavers. The Alternative Childcare Guidelines (2009) and the National Child Policy (2017) lack specific provisions for care leavers, particularly in terms of aftercare support and transition planning. There is also a lack of clear policies or guidelines for the leaving care process, leaving many young people unprepared for life after care.

▸ **Lack of Preparation and Support**: Many care leavers in Ethiopia are not adequately prepared for the transition to independence. They often lack essential life skills, such as financial literacy, cooking, and cultural literacy, which are crucial for successful integration into society. Additionally, there is a lack of formal support systems, such as mentorship programs, job training, and access to social services, which could help care leavers navigate the challenges of adulthood.

▸ **Gender-Specific Challenges**: Female care leavers face additional challenges, including higher rates of teenage pregnancy and limited access to education and employment opportunities. The lack of gender-responsive policies and programs further exacerbates these issues, leaving female care leavers particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Conclusion

The findings of this research highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policies and programs to support young care leavers in Ethiopia. The current system is ill-equipped to address the complex challenges faced by care leavers, resulting in poor outcomes for many young people as they transition to adulthood. The lack of research, policy, and support systems for care leavers in Ethiopia is a significant barrier to their successful integration into society. However, there are also opportunities for improvement. The research identifies several key areas where interventions could make a significant difference, including the development of clear policies and guidelines for the leaving care process, the provision of aftercare support, and the implementation of programs to equip care leavers with essential life skills. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of involving care leavers in the planning and implementation of policies and programs, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

Recommendations

To improve the welfare of YCLs, the study recommends:

► **Developing a Comprehensive Care-Leaving Policy** – Establish clear policies and structured guidelines that define transition support, including financial assistance, housing, and employment programs.

► **Strengthening Life Skills Training** – Equip care leavers with essential skills such as financial literacy, career planning, and social integration to enhance their self-sufficiency.

► **Enhancing Employment and Education Access** – Create pathways for vocational training, internships, and mentorship programs to improve employability and financial stability.

► **Providing Mental Health and Social Support** – Integrate counseling and peer support programs to address emotional and psychological challenges.

► **Facilitating Family Reconnection and Community Integration** – Strengthen efforts to reconnect care leavers with their families and

encourage community involvement in the transition process.

► **Building Institutional Capacity** – Train care professionals on best practices for preparing youth for independent living and ensure adequate funding for aftercare services.

Research Summaries from CYW-RPF presentations

Supplementary Scoping Study on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (TF VAWG) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Seid Ali

Introduction

Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TF VAWG) is a growing global issue, intensified by the rapid expansion of digital technologies. TF VAWG includes acts of violence committed or amplified through digital tools, causing physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm. Rooted in structural inequalities like patriarchy and gender discrimination, this violence replicates offline power imbalances in digital spaces. The UN Women's Safe Cities and

Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Programme, active since 2010, addresses sexual harassment and violence in public and online spaces across over 60 cities, including Addis Ababa, Hawassa, and Shashemene in Ethiopia. This study explores the prevalence, drivers, and impacts of TF VAWG in Addis Ababa to inform interventions.
Ethiopia's increasing digital access—60.4% mobile phone ownership and 24% internet penetration—has also enabled new forms of gender-based violence, such as cyberstalking, non-consensual image sharing, and online

harassment. Despite its prevalence, TF VAWG remains underreported due to limited awareness, weak legal frameworks, and societal normalization. This study aims to bridge the data gap and propose actionable solutions.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach, guided by UN Women's methodology, combining:

► **Desk Review**: Analysis of legal frameworks (e.g., Ethiopia's Criminal Code, Computer Crime Proclamation) and global TF VAWG trends.

► **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**: 22 interviews with government officials, NGOs, academics, media, and private sector stakeholders.

► **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**: Four sessions with high school boys, women with disabilities, women and girls, and journalists.

► **Challenges**: Limited data and difficulty engaging government agencies like the Information Network Security Administration (INSA).

Key Findings

The scoping study revealed several key findings regarding the prevalence, drivers, and impacts of TF VAWG in Addis Ababa:

► **Prevalence of TF VAWG**: TF VAWG is prevalent in Addis Ababa, with reported cases including the leaking of private information, online threats, doxing (publishing private information without consent), and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and recordings. These acts of violence are often normalized and invisible in society, making it difficult for victims to seek help or justice.

► **Digital Platforms and Tools**: The study found that TF VAWG primarily occurs through internet-connected technologies, particularly smartphones, which are widely used in Addis Ababa. Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube are commonly used to perpetrate TF VAWG. TikTok and YouTube were identified as platforms where feminists and activists are specifically targeted, while Telegram
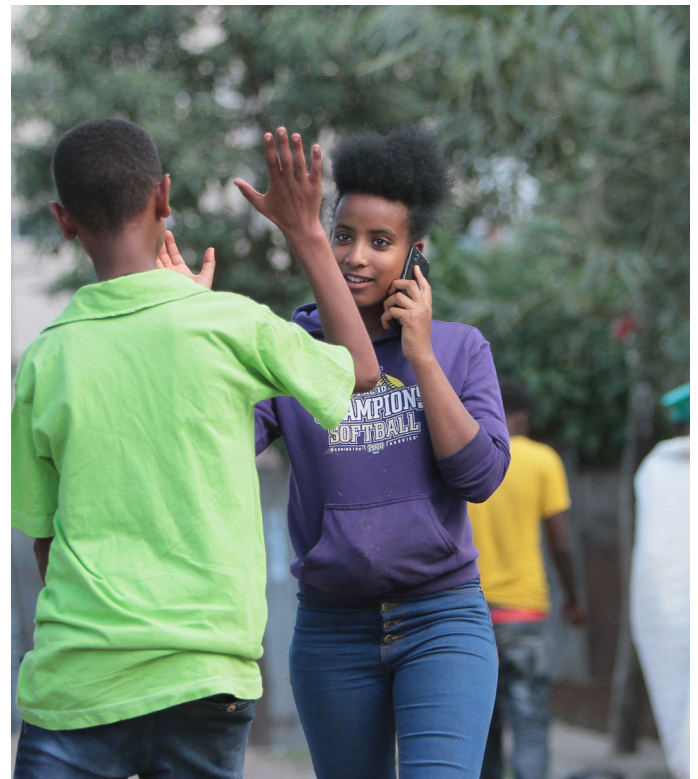
was seen as particularly problematic due to its default settings that allow users to be added to groups and channels without their consent.

► **Gender Digital Divide**: The study highlighted the existence of a gender digital divide, with women and girls facing significant barriers to accessing and using digital technologies safely. Many women and girls reported removing themselves from digital spaces or closing their social media accounts due to the prevalence of TF VAWG. This withdrawal from digital spaces further exacerbates gender inequalities by limiting women's and girls' access to information, education, and economic opportunities.

► **Lack of Awareness and Legal Frameworks**: The study found that most stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, were not aware that TF VAWG is a criminal act that violates the rights of women and girls. While Ethiopia has several legal and policy frameworks addressing gender-based violence (GBV), there is no comprehensive law specifically targeting TF VAWG. This legal gap contributes to the normalization and impunity of TF VAWG in Ethiopia.

- ▶ *Impact of COVID-19*: The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing forms of VAWG, including TF VAWG. The study found that the pandemic led to an increase in online harassment, image-based abuse, and misogynistic online posts. This trend is consistent with global data, which shows a significant increase in TF VAWG during the pandemic.
- ▶ *Vulnerability of Women and Girls*: The study identified several factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to TF VAWG, including poor digital literacy, lack of awareness about online safety, and the absence of effective reporting mechanisms. Women with disabilities and young women in high school and university were found to be particularly vulnerable to TF VAWG.

Conclusion

TF VAWG in Addis Ababa reflects deep-seated gender inequalities amplified by digital growth. Normalization of such violence, coupled with legal and awareness gaps, hinders accountability. However, opportunities exist through education, legal reforms, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to create safer digital spaces for women and girls.

Recommendations

- ▶ *Awareness Campaigns*: Educate communities, schools, and law enforcement on TF VAWG and digital safety.
- ▶ *Curriculum Integration*: Teach digital literacy and online safety in schools.
- ▶ *Legal Reforms*: Enact laws criminalizing online harassment, cyberstalking, and non-consensual content sharing.
- ▶ *Tech Collaboration*: Partner with platforms to improve content moderation and reporting mechanisms.
- ▶ *Enhanced Reporting*: Establish specialized law enforcement units for TF VAWG cases.
- ▶ *Data Collection*: Improve research to guide policies.
- ▶ *Economic Empowerment*: Support women's access to digital tools and training.

- ▶ *Community Engagement*: Involve men and boys in challenging harmful norms.
- ▶ *International Partnerships*: Learn from global best practices (e.g., UN Women, ITU).
- ▶ *Monitoring & Evaluation*: Assess intervention effectiveness regularly.

Interested to Know about CYW-RPF?

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) was recently renamed Children, Youth and Women Research and Practice Forum (CYW-RPF) in order to expand the mandate of the Forum at the request of stakeholders and after holding a survey poll of the mailing list members.

CRPF was established in 2010 to promote work on child research, policy and practice. CWY-RPF makes use of monthly seminars, quarterly newsletters and annual publications as a means to achieve its objectives. The publications are also available on the Young Lives Ethiopia website (https://www.younglives-ethiopia.org/). CYW-RPF is organized by Young Lives with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and UNICEF.

If you want to know more, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com