

# Child Research and Practice Forum Newsletter

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2012

## Message from CRPF

Dear readers,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the CRPF's quarterly newsletter. This issue features important updates on the activities of the Forum in addition to providing you with useful summaries of research presented at the monthly seminar series.

We are delighted to inform you that the CRPF is getting stronger with increased collaboration with pertinent line ministries and a new funding from the OAK Foundation for expanding CRPF activities. CRPF would like to acknowledge the usual collaboration and commitment of its steering committee that has been instrumental in enhancing its achievement.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions, and contributions. For more information contact us at CRPPF@gmail.com or Lishan.woldemedihin@savethechildren.org or 011-3-720030. Enjoy your reading!

## Updates on CRPF

### **Strengthening of the CRPF Steering Committee**

CRPF used to have an eleven member steering committee all of whom were from the NGO sector and UNICEF. Recently, Ministry of Women Children and Youth Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have joined CRPF as permanent members of the steering committee. The inclusion of representatives from these two important ministries in the steering committee marks a major step forward for CRPF. They are significant additions and CRPF welcomes them and looks forward to their active participation in the CRPF's endeavours to link research to policy and practice.

### **CRPF Transition to Save the Children International (SCI)**

It is to be recalled that CRPF was hosted by Save the Children UK. Now as a result of the merger of different Save the Children member organizations in Ethiopia and the forming of SCI, CRPF has also transitioned and is hosted by SCI starting from 1st of October 2012.



## In this Edition...

- ◆ **Update on CRPF**
- ◆ **Research Summaries of the CRPF Monthly Seminars**
- ◆ **Upcoming Events**

### **Monthly Seminar**

The monthly seminar series has continued to be held within MoWCYA's premises every last Friday of the month. A summary of three presentations are provided for your reading in this newsletter on pages 2-4.

### **OAK's New Grant for CRPF**

OAK Foundation has provided a new grant for CRPF for a project aimed at stimulating evidence-based approaches to child work/labour in Ethiopia. It also aims to contribute to new directions for research, policy and practice in relation to child protection and poverty through cross-country learning.

The program involves building a knowledge base and facilitating the exchange of experiences, research and information among partner organizations and key actors involved in the East Africa region. The program will also share the evidence by engaging in communication activities. This will include networking, synthesis of key lessons learned through seminars and events, newsletters and multi media activities.

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## Research summaries of the CRPF Monthly Seminars

In this issue, three research summaries are presented; these include: Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) and Child Protection: Contested Understandings and Practices of Female Genital Cutting in Ethiopia; Child Protection in the Somali Region of Ethiopia: Assessment report; Evaluation on the Progress in Abandoning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early Marriage in Self-Declared Woredas.

### Harmful Traditional Practices and Child Protection: Contested Understandings and Practices of Female Genital Cutting in Ethiopia

Presented by Alula Pankhurst based on a paper by: Jo Boyden, Alula Pankhurst, and Yisak Tafere (*This paper is published in the 'Development in Practice' Journal*)

#### Introduction

The study depicts the contrasting perspectives of early marriage and FGM and puts forward a basic question to understand why HTPs persist and tries to explore the complexity of this practice in the lives of those who adhere to them. It shows the cultural and religious values underlying the practices and argues that child protection should not always be taken straightforward.

The study defines early marriage as any union between individuals under the age of 18 years, this being the minimum legal age of marriage and the age of majority in Ethiopia. It defines female genital modification to denote all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non medical reasons.

#### Methodology

The findings are based on qualitative research conducted in the context of Young Lives. It draws on three rounds of data gathered from a sub-sample of 50 boys and girls in five out of the 20 Young Lives sites in Ethiopia, as well as with their peers, caregivers, and community representatives. Focus group discussions were conducted with boys and girls and adults in separate sessions and interviews with a range of community and religious leaders, elders, and service providers.

#### Findings

In addition to international forces of change, substantial effort has been expended in Ethiopia on measures to eliminate FGM and early female marriage. Through these efforts coupled with increased education opportunities for girls, values and attitudes in many communities have been transformed. A significant proportion of respondents have come to recognise these practices as harmful. On the other hand there is substantial resistance to stopping these practices both from parents/caregivers and the girls themselves.

For girls, it often has more to do with preventing social stigma and rebuke by peers, most likely reflecting their sense of what it means to be an adult woman in their community. Pressure to conform, peer pressure, in-

## A story of respondent from the HTP study

*In July 2008, I organised the circumcision of my other daughter who is 14. It was done at her request. After she witnessed a girl insulting another who was not circumcised, my daughter came home and asked me to organize her circumcision. She told me she does not want to be insulted in the same way. I told her I cannot do that because I could not afford to provide her good food like meat to heal. I suspected her father would not be willing to provide it. But she pushed and told me she did care about this and what she wanted was to get circumcised. Luckily, her father agreed and slaughtered a goat. She healed in two weeks. We did the circumcision in the evening for the fear of the local officials who could punish us. Despite being prohibited by the local officials everybody circumcises their daughter.*

sults, bullying added together have led many girls themselves organize their own circumcision. For adults, resistance to change often centers on the belief that they know best what risks their daughters confront and it is also considered as a means of tempering and subordinating 'excessive female sexuality' and means to shaping behavior.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

FGM and early marriage continue to happen in spite of the efforts to change the trend because practice is rooted in coherent cultural and religious logics. State imposed bans, resulted in transformations rather than abandonment adding risks. Therefore the study suggests the following key steps:

- Abolitionist approaches backed by punitive measures tend to either transform the practices, or drive them underground. Efforts that disregard children's wider social and economic circumstances, risk neglecting the most critical problems they face.
- Strategies should take into account where the resistance is coming from i.e. to target either the parents/caregivers or the girls themselves.
- A focus should also be given to boys (would be grooms) and in-laws.
- Advocacy around early female marriage and genital modification might be more effective if associated with increased access for girls to quality schooling, vocational training, employment, reproductive healthcare and contraception and so on.

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## Child Protection in the Somali Region of Ethiopia: Assessment Report

### Background

The assessment was carried out by Tufts University in 2011 for SCUK's BRIDGES project which combines education, protection and peace objectives. The project operates in Somali Region (Siti (Shinillie), Shebelle (Gode) and Fanfan (Jigjiga) zones) implemented by a consortium (SC UK, Islamic Relief and Mercy Corps) in partnership with the Regional Education Bureau. The objectives of the assessment were to investigate the perceived nature, prevalence, causes and impact of child abuse in communities; and analyze existing protection mechanisms that could be built upon for improving child protection in the Region.

### Methodology

The assessment mainly used qualitative method that engaged desk review, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Sites were selected based on BRIDGES' project sites except for two (Kebribeya and Dandamane). Girls, boys, members of Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA), Center Management committees (CMC), community elders/religious leaders and women groups (where available) were randomly selected for focused group discussion (75 girls, 69 boys, 40 PTA/CMC members, 55 women, 26 elders/men-totaling 265).

### Findings

**Child Labor.** Children are engaged in household chores, livestock herding, shoe shining, selling water transported by donkey carts, selling firewood and tooth sticks, being porters and manual laborers in construction sites, etc. In addition, boys and girls usually from the age of 15 and sometime earlier, leave to urban centers for work (eg. to Djibouti, Hartishek, etc).

**Corporal Punishment.** There is a general acceptance of beating as a form of disciplining. Both parents and teachers are reported to use various forms of corporal punishment such as beating with hand or stick, walking on knees on sand, holding ears while bending down, looking at the sun, twisting pen between fingers etc. There is also a traditional form of punishment – *boys are tied to the tree either standing or hanging down and beaten*. Usually boys are punished in a more severe manner than girls.

**Early Marriage.** Over half of the respondents (57%) stated that early marriage is common; girls from the age of 13 marry in most communities. The main causes were Sheria law (defining lesser age for adulthood) and customary practices, women being given to the brother of a deceased husband and promised for marriage.

**Female Genital Mutilation.** A large shift has taken place from infibulations to Sunna type. But in Gode and Kebribeya, infibulations seems to be more preva-



lent. The main reasons identified were fear of stigmatization, fear of not getting married and wrong belief on controlling girls' sexual behavior.

**Sexual abuse.** According to respondents, sexual abuse is not prevalent (While 77% reported that it does not occur, the remaining 23% confirmed its rare happening) because customarily it entails severe consequences and might lead to conflict. However, there is also the practice of giving the girl victim for marriage to the perpetrator rather than reporting the incident. This might contribute for non-visibility of the incident.

**Child Protection Mechanisms:** Three legal systems co-exist: Formal law, Customary law, and Sheria law; however, very little child friendly, nearby and confidential reporting mechanism exists.

### Recommendations

- Use Education as an entry for initiating child protection program and work with government to ensure flexibility of education to encourage school attendance.
- Build on positive child protection concepts and mechanisms being practiced in tradition and religion.
- Facilitate coordination and cooperation among the customary and religious institutions, relevant government offices, the justice sector and other services to develop functioning child protection monitoring and reporting mechanisms.
- Investigate the possibility of culturally appropriate ways for children to share their experiences and views on child protection issues.
- Pay special attention to inclusion of children from minority clans and address discriminatory practices.
- Establish a child friendly mechanism at schools for reporting and providing appropriate support to children.

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## Evaluation on the Progress in Abandoning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early Marriage in Self-Declared Woredas

Dr. Emezat, H. Mengesha; Dr. Lulit Mitik

### Background and Objectives

In an effort to abolish the practice of various forms of HTPs, community conversation has been found to be effective strategy resulting in declaration for the abandonment of FGM in some woredas. Following this declaration some progress towards abandoning FGM has been registered. This study is aimed at evaluating the progress in abandoning FGM and child marriage in these self-declared woredas of Ethiopia. It also aims to draw lessons from the programs and strategies employed on successful practices that can feed into the development of a National Plan.

### Methodology

The study used mixed methods to generate both quantitative and qualitative data from primary sources and secondary sources. It covered 10 woredas which have declared the abandonment of FGM practice that are found within three regional states: Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and SNNPR and the capital city Addis Ababa. A stratified two-stage cluster sample design has been used to select the samples. A total of 1,275 households took part in the study.

### Findings

Overall, quantitative and qualitative data revealed that FGM, child marriage, marriage by abduction and wife beating are currently on the decline.

**FGM:** There appears to be a perceived decline in the practice after the declaration. The findings show lesser rate of circumcision among the younger generation with close to 64% in Dale and Alaba and below 4% for Kolfe and Yeka. The overwhelming majority of women claim to be aware of the declaration in many of the woredas. Among teenagers, knowledge about the declaration is lower with 50-60% in SNNPR and much lower in other woredas with the lowest in Elidar at 12%.

**Child Marriage:** A large proportion of the respondents in all the woredas except in Afar reported a decline in the practice of child marriage in the last five years. The respondents attributed the decline to increased awareness that it is a harmful practice and increase in reporting to justice administration bodies.

**Abduction:** The practice of abduction appears to have shown a significant decline compared to other forms of HTPs in the study sites. Many of the respondents in both categories (Women and teenage girls) said abduction is declining except in Afar. The main strategy that is said to have worked in this regard is criminalizing the act with punitive measures.

**Wife Beating:** Only 30.2% of respondents said they have experienced beating in their life time. Reasons as explained by the respondent women are: refusing sex,

disobeying husband, food burning and simply due to culture. Women are generally aware of their rights and are beginning to bring their complaints to the authorities mainly to the women's affairs offices.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the study have shown that there are encouraging results and highlighted strategies that were effective in decreasing FGM. In addition to the decline in the practice of FGM, there is also increase in the level of awareness of the community on the adverse effects of FGM. The study recommended that any intervention targeted at decreasing HTPs has to bring men on board. Community conversation, use of existing community and religious structures, and school centered approaches are potential areas in efforts to bring about attitudinal change and the abandonment of FGM.



### Announcement

- We invite readers to visit the following website to access the Young Lives paper on: *From Policy to Implementation: Beyond Food Security: Transforming the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia for the Well-being of Children*  
Dr. Tassew Woldehanna and Yisak Tafere  
<http://www.younglives.org.uk/our-publications/working-papers/beyond-food-security-transforming-the-psnp-in-ethiopia-for-the-well-being-of-children>
- African Child Policy Forum proudly announces the opening of the **Children's Legal Protection Center (CLPC)** under the auspices of the Federal Supreme Court. One of the key activities of the CLPC is provision of legal protection to child victims and children in conflict with the law. Legal protection services will be provided in two of CLPC's branch offices situated at the Federal First Instance Court (Bole Branch) and at the Federal High Court and First Instance Court premises, (Lideta branch).

**CRPF strongly encourages participation at its monthly seminar,... lunch time, every last Friday of the month at MOWCYA.**

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Note: pictures are not of Young Lives research participants.