



ETHIOPIA



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EMPOWER YOUTH FOR WORK

Youth driving a better future

CONTEXT

Ethiopia is one of Africa's poorest nations, with over 100 million people living below the poverty line. Drought and environmental degradation affect families' livelihoods, forcing large numbers of people to migrate. Most of the country's youth live in rural and semi-urban areas with limited access to essential services. Unemployment is particularly high among young women. The Empower Youth for Work (EYW) program is implemented in Oromia and Somali regional states.

VISION

Our vision is to reduce poverty, empower young people and increase gender equality in rural and semi-urban climate change affected areas. We work closely with Oxfam's long-term partners Rift Valley Children and Women Development Organization (RCWDO) and Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee (HAVOYOCO). Gendered social norms and other barriers deprive young women of opportunities to engage in economic

activities. EYW advocates for policies and shifts in social norms to alleviate gender-based violence (GBV), reduce young women's disproportionate unpaid care workload and to improve sexual and reproductive health (SRH). In both its service delivery and influencing, the program collaborates with stakeholders such as the Women and Children Affairs Department and government job-creation offices.

STRATEGIES

We focus on increasing young people's agency and skills, improving economic opportunities and creating an enabling environment. EYW aims to help young people to be part of well-functioning and sustainable youth groups; to gain soft, technical and entrepreneurship skills in line with market opportunities; to establish new, climate-resilient micro-enterprises; to gain access to fair, affordable finance for these enterprises; and to improve their business and social performance. Creating an enabling environment includes reducing GBV and gender discrimination; redistributing care and domestic responsibilities; removing barriers to SRH; and influencing the government to adopt policies and practices in support of young people's social and economic empowerment.



Direct beneficiaries EYW Ethiopia



MOUWLEED'S STORY: 'PERSISTENCE PAYS'

Mouwleed, a 29-year-old chemistry graduate from Wajaale City in Somalia region, travelled to Addis Ababa in search of work due to lack of jobs in his home town. After gaining expertise at a soap factory, he moved back to Wajaale and founded the KAFIYA Liquid Soap Factory Enterprise with nine youth, including four young women. Despite their efforts, the group struggled to make their business profitable and eventually it closed.

With support from EYW, they took out a loan which they used to buy inputs and upgrade their machinery. This was the boost they needed to get the business up and running again. Soon, KAFIYA was producing around 3,600 litres of liquid soap per month and creating jobs for around 40 young people.

Mouwleed was thrilled when the enterprise was awarded a prize by the Somali region city forum, in recognition of its creativity and business performance. KAFIYA has scaled up again in response to coronavirus, and is playing an important social role by promoting hand washing and selling essential hygiene products to the wider community.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - YEAR 4

The program's key achievements in year 4 include reaching 7,127 youth by providing vocational and life skills training. During the same period the program identified, organized and strengthened 3,036 youth groups and enabled 1,198 youth enterprises to access a Loan Guarantee Fund (LGF), and the Government revolving fund scheme. Three life-skills training modules were developed in English and the two program target regions' local languages (Somali and Oromia); and 7 vocational and agricultural modules were developed in English. Overall, by the end of year 4 the EYW program in Ethiopia had reached 13,480 youth, more than 40% of whom are female.

To improve the business and social performance of youth businesses, a demand-driven mobile Business Development Support (BDS) innovation pilot was designed, piloted, tested and scaled up. EYW Ethiopia envisions that, following the successful pilot, the mobile BDS will expand to other youth groups beyond the program's target district and villages, and will be adopted by government offices.

To create an enabling environment for young people, EYW's weekly radio show

hosted a '16 Days of Activism' poetry competition to help raise awareness on GBV. Over 2,800 young people took part in bi-monthly 'Community Conversations' which addressed issues of GBV, SRH and unpaid care work.

EYW used international days such as the 16 Days of Activism and International Youth Day to mobilize communities and increase their awareness on the negative impacts of GBV, SRH and women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work.

INNOVATION

Innovative approaches taken by the program in year 4 included: organizing training sessions and developing modules in local languages to help reach more young people; revising the Community Conversation Facilitator Guide to better fit the context and increase impact; and using international day celebrations as discussion platforms where young people could directly voice their concerns and raise their issues with decision makers and other parties, and call for change.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

The main challenges and risks in year 4 related to misconceptions regarding the

LGF, young people's lack of commitment or business experience, young people's lack of financial capacity to sustain their business, and inadequate stakeholder support or commitment. The outbreak of Covid-19 and the limitations imposed by the government on gatherings of more than four people forced the EYW team to postpone training and youth-led initiatives.

The EYW program in Ethiopia is addressing these challenges by organizing platforms for youth, in discussion with implementing partners, on the regulations regarding the LGF; and managing a youth-led coronavirus response that takes the restrictions into consideration.

The team will provide BDS to youth business groups engaged in making products that can be used for Covid-19 prevention, such as liquid soap, pharmaceuticals, face masks etc., and will provide sanitation and hygiene materials for vulnerable target youth.

For more information, please visit:
www.empoweryouthforwork.org

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