

# **Drivers of the Demand for Child Labor: The Case of Addis Ababa, Hosana, and Wolaita**

A Report Submitted to  
Woord en Daad

By  
Desalegn Amsalu

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**About the consultant**

Desalegn Amsalu, PhD in Social Anthropology with a background in law is currently a researcher at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, as well as research head at the same institute. Previously, Desalegn completed several international academic consultancy researches. Among the recent ones is “Field Research on Land Rights, in Particular Land Inheritance Rights, of Women and Girls in Ethiopia” which is part of “Strengthening Federal Governance and Pluralism in Ethiopia Project” run by the Forum of Federations of Ethiopia office. Desalegn has several academic publications in peer-reviewed international journals or equally reputable edited volumes on topics such as social marginalization, identity, legal pluralism and the empirical study of Ethiopia’s federalism. He can be reached at [d2amsalu@yahoo.com](mailto:d2amsalu@yahoo.com).

**ABSTRACT**

This report is a study on the “Drivers of the Demand for Child Labor: A Case Study of Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita”. The objective of the study was to generate qualitative information on three points: on factors that contribute to the demand for child labor, on the impact of previous interventions on the cultural acceptance of child labor, and finally on opportunities for intervention against the demand for the child labor. The fieldwork was made between September 5 and October 8, 2021 in Addis Ababa, Hosana, and Wolaita respectively. The fieldwork and writing up went side by side because of a shortage of time.

The findings of the study on the first objective, i.e., factors contributing to the demand for child laborers, show the following. Child laborers are needed because they are less paid compared to those who have attained the legal age; they are obedient and submissive to their employers; there is less turnover with underage laborers; underage workers are less violent towards their employers; and they are more flexible and can easily learn language and other skills. The activities and places that young workers are more preferred for includes tea rooms, breakfast houses, hotels & restaurants, *jebena bunna*/street coffee vending, household work, waitressing , and “hulegeb” or mixed service. Yet, there are also some downsides with young laborers as reported by informants: child laborers have limited knowledge of cleaning and hygiene and they are less dependable to care for infants.

As to the impact of previous interventions on the cultural acceptance of domestic child laborers, first of all, it was not possible to get a full image about it, since it has to be done through a survey method. Some informants who participated in this research said they have never come across interventions on this topic and others said they received intervention from governmental and non-governmental offices in the form of trainings. The researcher has never come across parents, or victims, who said they have received at least training. On the other hand, brokers talked of several meetings and trainings with government or non-government organizations. Whether or not they have received training, all categories of participants (brokers, employers, and victims) admitted that they know child labor is illegal, but still it is fine to practice it. Many informants questioned the law itself that prohibits child labor in Ethiopia’s context. They forwarded points raising moral dilemma: it is good for those child laborers to work, or they would become street beggars. As long as they had no opportunity to go to school or make their living with their parents, then it is good for them to work. This claim generalizes the sole reason that children work is poverty. The argument tends to deny social attitudes that are also responsible for child labor.

The research findings suggested the following opportunities for intervention. Since a major reason for child labor is poverty, working towards poverty alleviation is *sine qua none*. In the meantime, there should be awareness creation mechanisms for employers, brokers, victims, transportation service providers, law enforcement organs, parents and vulnerable children. Besides, there needs to be strong labor inspection legislative regime and its implementation, which is not overwhelmed by corruption.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This report is a study on the “Drivers of the Demand for Child Labor: A Case Study of Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita”. The three specific objectives of the study as stipulated in the Terms of Reference were to investigate factors that contribute to the demand for child labor, to see if previous interventions have influenced the cultural acceptance of child labor, and finally to identify opportunities for intervention against the demand for the child labor. The first and the last objectives were adequately addressed and fit the context of the study. The other objective on the impact of previous interventions on cultural acceptance may require further study for a detail understanding (or may have already been done by one of the other two colleagues who are also working on other themes). Yet, I have addressed a few points about it. The findings on each of the three objectives are presented in subsequent sections.

The data collection for this report was based on fieldwork in Addis Ababa, Wolaita, and Hosana. The fieldwork in Addis Ababa was conducted in two rounds. The first round was from September 5, 2021 to September 10, 2021, until the eve of the New Year Celebration of Ethiopia, which is celebrated every year on September 11. The second round of fieldwork was conducted on September 18, 2021, to finish pending interview activities. The fieldwork in Hosana and Wolaita was delayed due to another major celebration two weeks after the New Year holiday. Meskel, the event that commemorates the finding of the True Cross, is celebrated every year on September 26 and 27. According to my communication with people whom I previously had known in Hosana and Wolaita, it was difficult to get accommodation a few days before and after the Meskel Celebration. Thus, I could make fieldwork in these two towns from September 29 to October 8, 2021. The fieldwork and writing up went side by side because of a shortage of time.

Fifty-nine in-depth interviews were conducted altogether. This number is greater than the original plan of fifty-four individuals: twenty-one from Addis, eighteen from Wolaita, and fifteen from Hadiya. The category of interview participants is employers, brokers, and victims. Seven employers in Addis Ababa, five in Hosana, and six in Wolaita were interviewed, which is in line with the original plan. Seven brokers in Addis Ababa, five in Hosana, and six in Wolaita Sodo were interviewed. All brokers (agencies) that claimed to have been legally registered were interviewed in Hosana and Wolaita Sodo. Besides, the researcher conducted informal conversation

with informal brokers that work in bus station areas in Hosana and Wolaita. Seven domestic workers in Addis Ababa, nine in Hosana, and six in Wolaita Sodo were interviewed, which means while the number of informants in Addis Ababa and Wolaita is as to the original plan, four more domestic workers were interviewed in Hosana because of ease of availability. The distribution of research participants from each site and the profile of each informant are given in the table in the appendix.

The researcher used a mix of mechanisms for the selection of research participants. Snowball sampling was used to select brokers and employers, while sometimes the researcher also randomly selected employers from those who visited the office of employment agencies to recruit laborers. For brokers in Hosana and Wolaita, the technique was purposive sampling, as the researcher took all brokers representing all registered employment agencies. For the victims, it was difficult to interview them while they were active at work. However, brokers facilitated the interview with those victims who stayed at brokers' offices to look for new jobs. Besides, some domestic workers in Addis Ababa were interviewed at their workplace with the willingness of their employers.

## **II. PREFERENCE TO CHID LABOR**

The data collected from Addis Ababa Hosana and Wolaita Sodo confirmed that there is a high demand for employment of underage children for domestic work. The following sections discuss *en route* process of child labor which is about recruitment and trafficking, areas of work child laborers are preferred for; specific reasons for preference to young workers, and some reasons yet young workers are not preferred.

### **1. Recruitment and trafficking**

The employers who took part in this study obtained their workers from rural villages or small towns in different ways. They would use their networks or employ laborers through brokers. To begin with how employers use their personal network, employers discussed that they often ask their relatives in rural villages to send them a family member for work. These relatives may need the labor for their business or for the household. The employers may tell the reality about the reason they sought for a laborer, or they give a false promise to the intended laborers to give them a better life in the towns, but eventually to engage them in labor. A broker discussed:

People who live in Hosana or any other town may call their relatives in the rural areas and ask them to send one of their children to the town. They would simply say ‘I want a girl from your family who would live with me and give assistance in my household work’. They tell the intended girl of their family members all sorts of enticing promises about education, clothing, food, etc. Once they get the laborers, they engage them in labor and do not keep promise.

The family members who visit their family during the holidays also convince rural children for migration to towns. The Hadiya and Wolaita peoples have the cultural New Year called “Yahode” and “Gifata” respectively which are celebrated around September 23. For the festival, there is a culture of people visiting family and parents from every corner of the country. The members of the community who return to their localities to visit their family are “dressed well” and also take uncommon gifts for their family and relatives. This in turn attracts fresh laborers who are living with their family and attending their school. The brokers in Hadiya and Wolaita told that after the celebration of Meskel or the cultural New Year in Hadiya and Wolaita, there is a high flow of labor from rural areas to towns. Many children migrate from rural areas to cities because of the influence of their friends who return to localities for the holidays.

Some laborers may also come in their own initiative even if their family or their friends refuse them to leave home. A group of young boys and girls may make secret arrangements to travel together to towns without being noticed by their families. Some kind of anger or hurt may push children to run away from, such as problems in their family. Some young boys and girls may also run away their villages as an adventure, after having seen someone else doing the same thing.

Whatever reason may trigger their departure, the potential child laborers are likely to meet brokers who operate in the zonal towns of Wolaita Sodo, Hosana (there are no brokers, at least formally operating, at or below the *woreda* towns) and Addis Ababa. There are two types of brokers: those who have a license and have offices and those who operate without any license. The formal or registered ones are inspected and regulated by labor and social affairs offices of respective administrative offices. They have also a bylaw that guides and controls their activities. Because of the regular inspection by labor and social affairs offices, they do not **officially** connect the



employers with the under-aged domestic workers. In Addis Ababa, the agencies are also expected to submit a weekly report to the labor and social affairs office on the number of domestic workers they connect with employers for documentation purposes while there is no such experience in Hadiya and Wolaita Sodo. According to the information obtained from the office of the brokers, there are about 200 registered brokers in Addis Ababa which are working this job in different sub-cities while there are allegedly only five and six in Hosana and Wolaita Sodo employment agencies, respectively. The researcher could not learn any presence of informal brokers in Addis Ababa while there are many in Hosana and Wolaita. In Hosana, one of the brokers interviewed last stated he is the only broker having a legal license, and those brokers whom the researcher had interviewed as though legal were in fact operating illegally without a license.

In Wolaita and Hosana, the brokers meet the child laborers at bus stations. Informal brokers at the bus stations meet the children and take them to "formally registered" agencies that have designated offices. The children recruited for labor are put behind the offices in covert places to avoid punishment (so as not to pay bribe so to say!) in case inspecting authorities (i.e., from the social and labor affairs offices) come. The consumers of child labor then appear in these offices and explain the laborer they want. As mentioned above, in Addis Ababa, the researcher did not come across any evidence of informal brokers. All the domestic workers have identity cards that prove that they are 18 years or older (even if actually they may not be 18). But in Hadiya and Wolaita, only a few agencies connect workers with ID cards with employers. Employers also do not ask whether the employees hold an identity card, nor do they check the age of the employees.

The problem is worst in Wolaita town where the researcher has observed and met informal brokers who recruit children from the bus stations. These illegal brokers are called "Amchi" (literally meaning bringer), and they were called "chilfit" (literally meaning, falcon) in Hosana. They approach and ask the children who come from different rural areas of Wolaita. These brokers receive about 180 birr per single child every time they transfer a child to the agencies that have offices. As mentioned above, these agencies that have offices in fact either do not a license or even when they have, they mix both formal and informal ways. Some agencies have offices, but their license is to do something else. As I suggested above, in Hosana town, five agencies which the researcher was told to be legal were visited. Informants also told that they were the only agencies

in that town. However, when the researcher probed for their license, he found out that only one agency has a license to work as an agent to connect employers with workers. The rest are working informally, even by putting banners publicly. I observed that the license of some agents is particularly for the petty coffee house, yet they have put banners as agencies. The same is true for agencies in Wolaita Sodo.

Observing underage children, most of them have no previous town experience. Many of them also talk local language; the brokers do not give them space to think or to express their interest. They just lobby them to follow. There are community-police around the bus station in Wolaita. Yet the police do not work against child labor trafficking regularly, rather do irregular campaigns. During the fieldwork in Wolaita Sodo the researcher observed that the policemen came to the bus station and arrested the brokers hanging around the bust station. They took them to the police station. For thirty minutes the bus station became calm. However, after thirty minutes, the usual business continued.

According to the law, a person who seeks work through agencies should have an identity card to show their age and their identity from their place of origin or residence. In Addis Ababa, one should have also three guarantors for a house servant to be employed in a house. However, child laborers either do not have any identity card or when they are aware of it; they get it from their rural residence. In the ID card, the legal age for work is written even if they are underage. When they have no ID card at all, the children can be informally passed to employers, sometimes with no contract at all and sometimes produce a fake contract.

With all the formal approach, it was difficult to know about the extent and presence of child labor. Especially, all agencies immediately denied they give employers underage workers. Besides, they rejected dealing with domestic housemaids. To get information for this research about how child labor is recruited informally, the researcher used a surveillance mechanism. After a long rapport with a broker in Wolaita Sodo, the researcher could learn informal mechanisms that actually dominate recruitment for labor. The broker with whom the researcher established trustable rapport suggested that there are informal brokers who stop at the bus station and prey on new arrivals. The broker assisted me in showing, without being noticed of what he was doing, who among the crowd

of people jostling at the gates of the public bus were informal brokers. The researcher and a local assistant approached a broker for a young worker. Three brokers immediately surrounded us. One of them pretended to be a legal broker, but we denounced that we are not interested in legality. Soon, they denied that they have any young workers at hand. We left our number with them to call us when they get one. Immediately, we received a call telling the researcher that they have found a girl of twelve ages. The researcher met the girl and the broker and discussed a bit until finally, the researcher disputed he does not want to hire the girl who cannot speak Amharic. The researcher received two more calls for two more girls with whom he did similar surveillance. These informal brokers take the girls to those "legal" agencies that have offices, so employers can normally go to those offices and pick a young worker of their choice. The researcher later realized rampantly even those agencies that claim to be legal connect young workers with employers.

## 2. Activities of young laborers

Child labor may occur in several places or activities. All legal agencies put banners having a list of works that they broker for employment, and such a list varies from agency to agency or depending on the area of the case study. The list of areas of employment in the picture below appears to be commonly found in Wolaita and Hosana towns. This does not mean, however, that the brokers do not link in other work areas that are not listed.



Translation

**Mulugeta** Employment Agency

**Services we provide**

Supervisor	Baker (bread)	Biscuit roaster	Cleaner
Cooker	<i>Sambusa</i> roaster	chef	Glass washer
<i>Enjera</i> baker	Waiter/waitress	Buffet maker	Dish washer
Butcher	Bed maker	Coffee maker	Dough mixer
Bar tender	Assistant cooker	We buy used household goods	<i>Samabussahouse</i> Assistant

There are some activities that are not appropriate for child laborers, because of their age/physical dexterity. Child laborers are usually engaged in petty, unskilled, labor intensive works in the household or in business.

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<b>Area of work</b>	<b>Detail activities</b>	<b>Preferred gender</b>	<b>Place</b>
Tea rooms	Small tea rooms have customers most of who may be day laborers and "lower class" urban citizens. Child laborers are needed to serve the customers, to cleaning houses, or washing of glasses. Tea rooms serve only tea made by charcoal which can be handled by child laborers with a charcoal stove. Cafés, unlike tea houses, employ more trained and of age personnel.	Girls	Hosana& Wolaita
Breakfast houses (qursaquurs bet)	These are also “lower class” business activities that need child laborers. Breakfast houses, as brokers call “qursaquurs” houses are engaged in serving breakfast in the mornings for a lot of customers who are most often "lower-class citizens".	Girls	Hosana& Wolaita
Hotels & restaurants	Young laborers can also be employed in the hotels and restaurants, dedicated to more intensive works of cleaning of floors and toilets as well washing glasses. Boys need more labor-intensive works, such as wood chipping.	Girls, boys	Hosana& Wolaita
Jebenabunna/street coffee vending	“Jebenabunna” is traditional coffee making on the roadsides or veranda of hotels, restaurants, or bars. Child laborers are needed for coffee making of <i>jebenabunna</i> or assistants such as cup washers of the main coffee maker.	Girls	Hosana& Wolaita
Household servant			Addis Ababa

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	As household servants, child laborers perform a variety of household activities for members of a household, which include providing cleaning the household, cooking, washing clothes, care of children and elderly dependents, and other household errands.	Girls	
Waitressing	Child laborers can also be need for waitressing in smaller cafes.	Girls	Addis Ababa, Hosana, Wolaita
“Hulegeb”	“Hulegeb” refers at a child laborer that is tasked for all activities. A labor who is “hulegeb” does not have any designated task, but can do anything as necessary and ordered by their employer.	Most often girls, but also boys	Addis Ababa, Hosana, Wolaita

**3. Reasons for preference**

Employers who want to employ domestic workers under the age of 18 have different reasons for doing so. These employers outlined that underage domestic worker offer unique advantages for employers. Most of the employers who preferred underage workers explained the following factors to choose underage workers.

*a) Child laborers are less paid*

Underage domestic workers are paid lesser salaries than those older workers. Some of the informants among the employers who employed underage girls as homemade said that underage workers are not able to work on every domestic activity. Thus, they do not ask for expensive money and they are yet to learn different cooking skills and homework from their employers. The amount of payment made to child laborers varies among the three case study areas. Wolaita is frequently mentioned as a source of cheap labor. According to agencies in Hosana and Wolaita, there is a high mobility of underage children of both sexes from rural areas of Wolaita to the urban areas. Employers in Hosana town told that rather than employing two adult cooks with expensive money, they prefer to employ four underage children with cheap prices who can cover the whole activities of their small restaurants. The table below shows the salary amount and the respective rate commission for Hosana.

Salary in birr	Commission in birr
500-1500	300
1501-1999	360
2000-3000	400
3001-4000	500
4001-5000	600
5001-6000	700
Greater than 6000	25%

Source: Promise Agency, October 2021, Hosana

The salary scale which is given above as an example of an agency in Hosana is not determined just based on the work a person is recruited for. Important negotiating criteria also include the age and experience of a worker. The younger the worker, the cheaper they are paid. Besides, the less experienced a candidate is, the lesser salary they are paid. If a candidate is young and has no

experience, the payment would be much lower. As we discussed with brokers, apprentice young laborers are paid as low as 300 Ethiopian birr, or in some cases, they child laborers can be taken for free until they learn a skill with the same employer.

Wolaita and Hadiya are also considered as a source of cheap labor. Even the labor wage is not the same in Wolaita Sodo, Hadiya and Addis Ababa for the labor that comes from Wolaita. According to one middleman, one child can be employed by 300 birr in Wolaita Sodo town, while the same child can be paid 500 birr in Hosana and 1000 birr in Addis Ababa.

*b) Obedient and submissive*

Underage children follow orders and instructions from their employers better than older laborers. Young laborers do what is told by their employers to do, without resistance or quarreling. Young workers do not complain about much work, or defy the situation they are in. Older workers are resistant; sometimes enter a quarrel, or even if they do not openly resist, they would show such resistance indirectly such as completing a certain activity slowly than an employer may expect.

*c) Less turnover*

Some employers who employ underage children as home maids outlined that the young domestic workers have more tendency to stay for a long period. Employers want to employ young workers because underage domestic workers are likely to stay at their work for a long time until they are matured enough for marriage or exploring their environment to look for other opportunities. Young workers request breaks less frequently. Most employers do not prefer domestic workers who ask them for frequent breaks. Employers were also asked to suggest the time of break for the domestic workers. Most employers prefer to give monthly breaks to their domestic workers. But the underage domestic workers may not ask break even monthly and most of them especially those who come from far areas stay for an extended time without a break. Older workers also may have a sexual partner or opposite-sex friendship.

Explaining this idea, most of them told from the experience that domestic workers who are above the age of 18 want to marry and they do not want to stay for a long period as domestic workers. Even when they do not marry, they want to make friends with the opposite sex for future marriage.



*d) Children are less likely to harm their employers*

Employers also need young workers because they do not attack the employers in case of disputes.

Explaining this, 45 years old employer told:

.....we are living in the same compound with different people. I have also experience in employing different domestic workers for the last ten years. Most of my domestic workers were under the age of 18. I preferred them because they offer me distinct advantages. They are loyal and they do not give my property to neighbors without my knowledge or permission. According to my experience, workers above the age of above 18 have more tendencies to give property to the neighbors. They are not ashamed of creating a relationship with neighbors without my consent. One of my workers, 25 years old, did this. Household items that I bought for a month, such as food oil, would run out before time. I became suspicious and started following up on my worker's relationship with my neighbors. Finally, I confirmed she was giving oil, salt, sugar and butter to the neighbors. When I asked her reason for doing that to me, her answer was ridiculous and she did not regret her wrongdoing. But, the children are quite shy and they are less likely to do this kind of thing.

*e) Easily learn a language and other skills*

In Addis Ababa most of the domestic workers come from remote areas. Workers who come from the Oromia Region and the Southern region of Ethiopia, especially from Wolaita, do not speak Amharic or have a communication barrier. Yet the agencies and employers confirmed that even though they do not speak Amharic, younger workers take a short period to learn the language. Therefore, most employers agreed they agree to employ children who do not speak Amharic since they learn the language and communicate easily than older workers. This is also true for Wolaita and Hadiya. Most of the underage workers come from remote rural areas where the only local language is spoken. But after joining the town they only take a small period to learn the language. The agencies also told that employers do not mind employing young workers who do not speak the Amharic language expecting that they can easily learn it and they can do their work with gesture communication.

## **2. Limitations of hiring underage children**

Besides the qualities mentioned by the employers about the underage domestic workers, some employers also raised some limitations of these domestic workers.

### *a) Do limited activities*

Employers of underage house servants in Addis Ababa complained since they come from rural areas and young workers do not have previous work experiences, they are not good at properly keeping the house clean and keep personal hygiene. Employers also underlined that the underage domestic workers do not carry out activities without the help and the guidance of the employers, which enforce the employers to invest much time in training and assisting these workers. Moreover, they are not strong enough to wash heavy clothes. The same complaint was raised by employers in Wolaita and Hosana by employers who employed underage workers for their cafeterias and restaurants. Some employers also reject children domestic workers because they do not have time to teach their employees, since, for example, employers may be office workers. These kinds of employers employ older domestic workers who can perform activities independently. They also stressed that underage children should get schooling and employing them as domestic workers is *immoral*. This group of employers is relatively educated and tried to advocate for the right of child domestic workers.

### *b) Less dependable to care for infants*

Some employers shared their experience that when they left their babies with young domestic workers, the latter consumed the food prepared for the babies. Another employer in Addis Ababa, who is an attorney, told that she came across a young worker who was abused by her employer on the pretext that the young domestic worker had drunk milk and ate food that was meant for a baby of the employer. The attorney told that the employer bit the child worker and also burnt her fingers with fire. According to the attorney, the employer was imprisoned for a week. The attorney employer also underlined that child workers can do any mistake. However, physical violence should not be exercised on them.

An employer who has two years old kid told that she does not want to employ underage domestic workers because she does not believe they can take responsibility without close supervision of employers. Some employers also recommend that the underage domestic workers better give care for children with a close supervisor of a grandmother or any other people. However, giving them such full responsibility has more risk than benefit. A 36 years old informant told the risk:

..... I do not want to employ underage children, because, for example, if the kid may fail onto the ground, she may be afraid of telling me and that may expose the infant to a lifelong problem or disability. But the mature workers may know the risk very well and they take more responsibility to protect children and to tell for the parents if something wrong has happened. Besides, young workers are more likely to mishandle kids, such as drop kids onto the ground, compared to older workers. Older domestic workers are needed for baby care.

Despite young workers are not preferred for some activities such as baby care, as discussed above, there is a high demand for employing underage domestic workers in Addis Ababa or other case study areas. According to one middle woman who has been working as a broker for the last six years in Yeka sub-city of Addis Ababa, many clients always told her to connect them with “child” workers. Customers prefer young workers because they are swift, flexible and active. She also added that even though most of their clients need “child” they can only connect workers above the age of 18 and those with an identity card. Holding of identity card has a dual purpose here. In the first place, it is proof that the employee is old enough for work. Second, it is also a guarantee that the employee's address and background are known from her identity card.

### **III. IMPACT OF PREVIOUS INTERVENTIONS ON CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE OF CHILD LABOR**

#### **1. Impact of Interventions on Employers**

The government of Ethiopia with its structure of labor and social affairs office at different levels attempted to enforce some rules and regulations regarding child labor exploitation. In this regard labor and workers affairs office of Addis Ababa has rigorous mechanism to control agencies that are opened to connect domestic workers and employers. Agencies in

Addis Ababa has license to recruit domestic workers according to the proclamation of workers and employers 377/96 article 9. Domestic worker employers who are found in Addis Ababa are aware that the minimum age of employing the domestic workers. Indeed, they are also forced to do that because the candidate workers should hold identity card which bears age on it. The problem is still holding identity card may not prove the exact age of the candidates. All parties know that the contract and the age issue are only for the sake of maintaining legality. This is because the agencies should report to labor and social affairs office and to the police stations weekly.

The employers in Addis Ababa also underlined that they do not know any organization which works against child labor. Most of the employers also told that they heard about child labor rarely from electronic media. However, employers as stakeholders in Addis Ababa especially, people who employ domestic workers were not targeted by any intervention.

In Hadiya and in Wolaita still the impact of the previous interventions is less visible on the employers. Even if all interviewed employers and brokers believed that employing underage children is illegal and even “immoral”, most of them again have the experience of dealing with underage workers. Only few employers who were involved in this research appear to genuinely reject to employ children. Most of them give contradictory answers when they are strongly probed: while they criticize that child labor is illegal or immoral, at times they also argued that by employing young workers, they are creating opportunities for children who otherwise would have been homeless and street children. Thus, the previous interventions (assuming that there were) which have been working to combat child labors in the area do not seem have eradicate the problem.

## **2. Impact of interventions on brokers**

Agencies especially the formally registered agencies in Addis Ababa and in SNNPR know the illegality of child trafficking and child labor. They also sign memorandum of understanding with labor offices when they secure license. The problem is while most of the brokers work informally, those agencies that have license even mix both formal and informal mechanisms. Agencies who

are working in Addis Ababa, Yeka sub city, were asked about whether they know any non-governmental organization that they know and working against child labor. They were also asked whether they take any training for the last five years. However, seven of the middlemen and women replied that they didn't know any organization working against child labor and they also did not take any training for the last five years regarding child labor. But they still told that they have a good communication with labor and social affairs offices.

Agencies in Addis Ababa have also associations which work in collaboration with police and labor affairs office. They also told that they have received some support to publish posters and brushes from labor and social affairs and to display those posters on their office. They said that they have received trainings from labor and social affairs regarding reproductive health problems. However, the trainings are not thorough, and the impacts of such trainings are not strong. One of the middlemen in Yeka sub city told that he received brochures from the office of labor and social affairs to give for the domestic workers that he connects with employers. However, he said that he just holds the brochures in his office, and he didn't distribute them to any of the job seekers. He said that his reason of refraining from giving the brochures to the domestic workers is that he didn't believe that it makes sense to the workers because most of them are not educated. Hence some of interventions seem superficial.

In Hadiya and Wolaita also, some of the middlemen said that they took trainings provided by the labor and social affairs office. However, some of them underlined that the meetings were held in big halls for all formally registered agencies all over the SNNP region. The trainings are not frequent, and they do not address specifically child labor. Yet after the COVID-19 pandemic, trainings are even more infrequent. The impact of the interventions is the fact many registered unregistered brokers still engage in child labor quasi-hideously.

### **3. Impacts of interventions on victims**

In Addis Ababa, some victims who used to live with their close relatives said that they just left their relatives' house when they became aware of their right to education and freedom of movement. One 18 years old girl who used to live with her aunt since she was 7 told that when she became 17, she started putting questions to her aunt about the reason she didn't go to school while

her aunt sent her own daughters to school. When she couldn't get an answer, she left her aunt's house and went back to her home place. After holding an ID card, she came to Addis Ababa again and started working as a domestic worker with salary.

Victims in Addis Ababa discussed that during the interview that even domestic workers can have access to media and they have also relatively better advantages of knowing how to protect themselves from abuse and also how to report to legal body by the time they face any difficulties. However, this seems to be less true for victims in Hosana and Wolaita. The problem is seems worse in these towns compared to Addis because most of legal interventions do not reach victims at grassroots level. Most of the children are out of communication and spending the longest hour at work. Thus, they are not easily accessed to intervention for, for example, awareness raising activities.

## **V. OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERVENTION**

### **1. Poverty Alleviation**

The principal factor that contributes to both laborers and employers to engage in child labor is broadly either economic poverty or societal attitude. Most of the interviewed underage children in Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita Sodo towns told that they left their places of origin because their families could not send them to school. Those who were already in school were also forced to drop out because of financial problems. Most of the interviewed underage was members of a family of a large size. The limited capacity of parents to fulfill school materials for children forced, especially the eldest ones, to drop out of their education and to look for job opportunities. Children, who were interviewed in Hosana, told that most of them dropped their education because of the economic limitation of their family to send them to school. This is also true for children in Wolaita Sodo. Yet, the limited land resource of the Wolaita community and the highest density of the rural society makes Wolaita zone among the most significant source of child labor. The Domestic workers who were interviewed also told that most of the time girls at the age of 12-15 want to leave their places and come to Addis Ababa in search of a job. According to them the girls at this age are at high risk of getting marriage especially if their parents are poor or separated because of different reasons. Besides early marriage that forced girls to leave their place of origin and to come

to Addis Ababa, girls at this age were also attracted by their peers who already left their original places and started to visit their parents for Holidays. Thus, many girls are attracted to Addis Ababa because of the influence of other girls who already live in Addis Ababa. Understandably, girls above this age are not that much interested in coming to the town because they are already getting marriage or they are less attracted to Addis Ababa because they are not watching their peers in the circumstances.

The poor economic situation is also reflected on the side of the employers. As discussed above, one of the reasons that they seek for young laborers is to pay less. As the discussion with the all the participants in all categories suggested, economically better-off families and businesses are more likely to avoid child labor, by employing more aged and more skilled laborers. The data suggests that most often, child labor occurs when families face financial and economic challenges, and vice versa. Informants have discussed such experience of their own or other people they know. An informant, in Addis Ababa, 52, stated:

I don't have a reliable source of income. I just earn small income by engaging in street vending of cloths. I have five children, one male and four females. My husband does not have sufficient source of income either. He is a security guard at a bank. Two of the children now are in school while the others have completed. Since earlier times, whenever I want a domestic worker, I would call my relatives (mother and brothers) in North Shewa, and ask them to prepare a mall girl that would asst me in labor. Earlier, I even didn't them. They worked for me for free while I bought them cloths and shoes. I could not pay them salary. Now, I don't have any domestic worker because I could not find someone who would work for me for free or for little pay. Now things have changed.

Working on improving economic situation of rural households and all households for that matter is an important mechanism to meaningfully reduce the demand child labor. Creating poverty alleviation mechanisms by supporting children to stay in school is vital. Creating a mechanism that alleviates poverty at grassroots level will decrease the number of children who migrate to towns in search of food.

## **2. Awareness creation**

Yet, poverty cannot be responsible for all child labor. Societal attitude aggravates the demand for child labor. Thus, engaging in awareness creation and advocacy is indispensable to ameliorate child labor conditions in Ethiopia. The following are suggested points on who and how to make awareness creation/raising.

### *a) Employers*

Employers who were interviewed in Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita Sodo show a lack of awareness about the problem of employing underage children. Most of them know that the illegality of employing underage children. However, most employers still rely on underage labor to run their businesses or household. Yet employers in Addis Ababa who seek domestic workers are more vibrant and conscious in avoiding underage domestic workers. This could be because of the knowledge they have about child labor and also because they prefer mature maids who can take the entire responsibility. Therefore, awareness creation should be specific to address the gaps in employers' side who hire underage domestic workers in Addis Ababa and also specifically to address employers' in Hosana and Wolaita Sodo who rely on child labor.

Employers were frequently accused by the employees that they do not give ample food and break time for their workers. Moreover, they were blamed since they do not provide safe sleeping space. Therefore, employers should be trained about the protection that they should give for their employees. Specifically, some underage children who were interviewed in Addis Ababa and Hosana told that they were smacked by their employers. Therefore providing training regarding basic principles of human and children protection rights seems vital. Children are trafficked into towns. Especially in Wolaita Sodo area there is a rampant movement of child laborers from the rural areas to urban centers because there is a high demand of child labor by the laborers. Thus there should be a serious awareness creation intervention on the employers.



*b) Brokers*

Brokers also lack knowledge about protecting the rights of children. Some of the brokers have a better educational background but still, there should be a serious intervention in bringing behavioral change. Since the brokers consider child trafficking as a business connecting work seekers with employers is more important than protecting the children's rights. Thus, they try their best to connect the children with employers in both legal and illegal ways. Legally, the agents open agency offices by securing a license. But most of the brokers know that the work is perhaps done "on air" which means there it has been also observed that they are fine to connect the workers and the employers in an informal way.

In Wolaita Sodo it has been observed that two agencies just displayed above age workers and many children were hidden beyond the curtain. This shows, besides awareness creating training, the agencies should learn about child protection principles. Many of the brokers who are engaged in connecting employers and workers are blamed for giving wrong information about the candidates for their clients. Due to this problem employers' expectations about their workers will be high and in turn drive the employers and the workers to dispute. Coincidentally during the data collection time in Wolaita Sodo it has been noticed that one of the agents were asked to give a cooker for a restaurant. Then he has recruited 15 years old girl who came from the rural area of Wolaita. When he asked the victim about the work that she preferred to do, she told him that she wants to join a cleaning work especially cleaning cattle dung. However, when he was asked for an assistant cooker the broker sent this girl as a cooker by telling the employer false information about the girl's preference. Finally, on the second day, the employer returned the girl to the broker. There are many similar stories about the false statements given to employers by the brokers about the workers. Thus, work ethics training should be provided for the brokers.

Most of the interviewed agencies in Addis Ababa, Hosana, and Wolaita told that there is no governmental or non-governmental organ that gave them training worth talking. Besides different awareness creation mechanisms which can widen the knowledge of the

community regarding child labor, middlemen and women especially, legally registered agencies have to get training to minimize the gap in their knowledge of child labor.

*c) Victims*

Significant numbers of children leave their home places and are pulled by their friends' lives in the town. There is peer pressure which pushes children living in rural areas of Hadiya zone to go to Hosana town in search of a job. One broker in Hosana town underlined the peer pressure as follows,

Most labor workers get back to their home places for Meskel festival. When they get back to their home places, all of them try to dress well and also take different gifts for their family and friends. When their friends see the gifts, new clothes and shoes they will be inspired to come to town and to do the same. Therefore, even the underage children come by following the people who went to the rural areas for Meskel festival.

Besides different factors that attract children into labor, there is also an awareness gap at grass root levels. Hence, children at grass root levels should be educated and learned about the impact of leaving their education in their future life. There were many interventions at the grassroots level which can ease different problems such as child marriage. Just like that working at the grassroots level to create awareness for school children will be successful in maintaining children at school. The role of school mini media and the role of teachers will be significant in educating school children about child labor. Besides poor access to education and lack of school materials which were raised by some informants.

Therefore, creating awareness in the rural areas, especially for school children and teaching them about the reality in the town, is imperative. In addition to teaching school children, it is also vital to teach their parents to protect their children and advise them to stay in their area and attend their education is also important. Therefore, different stakeholders, including government offices and CSOs, should intervene by crafting community-based projects which can contain the children in the school and with their families. In this regard, interventions could be material and financial support for school children.

*d) Transport service providers*

In Addis Ababa, the problem is less visible because most of the labor at least holds identity cards. However, in Wolaita and Hadiya children move alone by paying for their transportation. The brokers wait for the children when they get out of the bus and take them to different agencies. Therefore, working with transport service providers and give them training about child labor or teaching them by using different media outlets. In this regard, transport service providers could work either by rejecting underage passengers from their original hometown or they can report to the legal bodies at destinations.

*e) Law enforcement organs*

Informants who are brokers and victims suggested that the concerned government bodies are trying to regulate informal mechanisms of child trafficking, even so, the problem is significant. The regulatory mechanism is not strong, and it was raised by some of the middlemen that the license providing offices are bribed. To expand the legal agencies, the license giving process should be digitized and standardized. In fact, the problem seems less rampant in Addis Ababa because of better regulation mechanisms of labor affairs offices but in Hosana and Wolaita Sodo towns, the informal agencies are proactively recruiting children for labor.

*f) Parents and vulnerable children*

As discussed hitherto, three categories of people participated in this research, i.e., employers, brokers, and victims. The study did not participate parents and vulnerable children since they were not part of the study according to the Terms of Reference. Had they been part of the study, the research would have visited villages in Hadiya and Wolaita Zones, where source families for child laborers are largely found. So, the researcher did not directly hear from parents and vulnerable children, to propose intervention mechanisms from the perspective of parents and vulnerable children themselves. However, employers, brokers, and victims that participated in this study often mention family situation as one reason serving the demand for child laborers. It is mentioned in this report that some parents even encourage their children to go out to towns, work and earn money, and support their

parents. So, it is important to address both economic problems and social attitudes of parents and vulnerable children.

*g) Some suggestions on awareness creation can be made*

Research participants who said they have previous experiences of receiving awareness creation interventions did not appreciate the trainings they received, especially for those attempted by the government organs. Brokers in Hosana and Wolaita who had the experience of participating in trainings stated that all registered brokers, whether in Hosana, Wolaita, or elsewhere in the region, were often invited by the regional government of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State and were given lectures about illegal human trafficking and child labor. A large number of brokers from the region were put together in a hall and were told about a certain topic by a government officer. They also see those trainings by NGOs are done because the later have to do their job.

- The findings of the fieldwork show that previous attempts of intervention were also less effective, as brokers who had participated said, they were meeting like events. There needs to be more innovative and impactful approaches to awareness creation. For example, instructive videos instead of just talking only, and developing content that is tailored to the different group people, i.e., parents, children themselves, and brokers can help for a better impact.
- Previous interventions were also not inclusive of all actors. The researcher has not found any victim of employer who witnessed any prior experience with awareness raising activities. Inclusive approach is thus necessary.
- There is no a recipe developed through research, nor could be developed by any research, since such approaches should be contextually tailored. Government organization directly concerned with this activity are social and labor affairs offices, the police, justice office, and the court. In addition, churches and schools, for example, can be used as institutions close to the community based.

### **3. Legislative mechanisms**

Awareness raising activities routinely provided may not be effective if there are no effective legislative mechanisms as well. The research strongly recommends emphasis

should be given to legislative mechanisms. The legal research is not part of this research, and cannot give a full discussion on it. But, some issues that emerged during this research need attention.

*a) Schooling opportunities for domestic workers*

Most of the domestic workers are girls who drop out of their education in search of a job and a better life. Most of them are also below grade five. According to the interviewed domestic workers in Addis Ababa, most of them do not want to get back to school because they fear they may not be successful in learning. After all, they stayed far from education for a prolonged time. Employers do not want domestic workers who want to go to school.

According to employers, one of the major criteria, while they recruit domestic workers, is that they do not want workers who want to go to school. For most employers, sending domestic workers to school has many consequences. First, if the domestic workers go to school, there will be a gap in their work. That means the domestic activities may not be covered during the school time of the workers. Most of the employers, especially who have regular jobs, have no time to take home responsibility from the domestic workers and to allow them to school. Above all, most of the employers perceived that the domestic workers who want to go to school are not really patient to attend the school rather; they use the schooling time to go to different places and to chill with their friends. Above all, there is a visible behavioral difference between the domestic workers who are learning and those who are not learning. Therefore, there should be a binding principle that works to create learning opportunity for domestic workers. The learning platform might also include virtual or remote methodology.

*b) Effective labor inspection*

Many informants suggested corruption involved in labor inspection. Clear violation of the law is even skipped as inspection officers are bribed. So, corruption in this area of underage labor should be at least minimized. Besides, inspection activities need not be limited to only visiting employment agency (broker) offices. Inspectors need to be authorized by law to enter premises in order to enforce provisions applicable to domestic work. The inspectors may be authorized to

check valid employment contracts, inspect age of employees when it appears to be doubtful of one's legal age, and the like.

*c) Access to justice*

Child victims have limited knowledge of their rights. Besides, the adults whom the child victims depend on also have less awareness about child rights. The awareness raising activities which are suggested above need include topics on the legal rights; but the justice system should also be more proactive and facilitate access.

**VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This report dealt with three objectives: investigating reasons and areas of work that child laborers are needed, impacts of previous interventions on the societal attitude towards child labor, and opportunities for intervention. The findings show that employers have specific reasons that they seek for child laborers, as there are also specific factors that they do not. The social and economic situation of a family or employer, such as small and lower-level businesses needs younger laborers to operate which means also less payment. Larger business targeting economically well-off customers also need child laborers but in those areas that behind the curtain, such as washing glasses instead of waitressing. There are specific socio-economic contexts that necessitate child laborers across the three studies areas of Addis Ababa, Hosana, and Wolaita. As to the impacts of previous interventions, in the first place, brokers have more exposure to trainings or other awareness creation activities unlike victims, employers, vulnerable children or families. Besides, those brokers who took the trainings suggested they take those trainings because they have been invited by a certain organ, not to learn from them and change the situation. So, trainings are not only inclusive of all parties, but also those brokers who took the trainings consider them as *rites de passage*. This all shows that in order to tackle the problem of child labor, there need to be a legislative and non-legislative mechanism of intervention. As to the geography of the demand for child labor, the findings of the research suggest that Wolaita is the worst, Hosana worse, and Addis Ababa better. Wolaita is the major and the cheapest source of labor, even for Hosana. Justification is there is a high population density in Wolaita and a high internal migration culture. Addis Ababa is better off for different reasons. There is a

more concentration of educated and urbanized people in Addis Ababa, so they have a better awareness on child labor. Besides, normally child laborers do not directly come to Addis Ababa, they have to work in smaller urban areas and learn skills and language, which means that, when they migrate to Addis Ababa after having exposure elsewhere, they would already become of age.

## Appendix: Detail profile of informants

### ADDIS ABABA

#### I. Employers

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Marital status	work	Number of children
1	Aster Tessema	F	65	Diploma	Married	Housewife	6
2	BirhaneEtana	F	52	Degree	Married	Nurse	2
3.	MeronKassahun	F	36	Masters	Single	Lawyer	0
4	KidistMinase	F	40	Degree	Divorced	teacher	1
5	TigistSahle	F	43	Grade 12	Married	hair dresser	4
6.	AberashDegu	F	60	Grade 4	Married	House wife	9
7	WubeDebela		35	Degree	Married	teacher	3

#### II Middlemen/women

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Work experience as "legal" brokers
1	WubayehuBante	F	32	Degree	1 year
2	Meronyimer	F	23	Grade 8	2 years
3	TigistAtnafu	F	34	Grade 12	3 years
4	BediluArega	M	28	Grade 10	5 years
5	YasinSeid	M	30	Grade 5	4 years
6	Daniel Amenu	M	36	Grade 12	2 years
7	Ahmed Yasin	M	33	Grade 8	2.5 years

#### III domestic workers

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Place of origin	Age at first work
1.	RahelFikru	F	16	Grade 7	Gondar	14
2	BetelhimMesfin	F	20	Grade 4	Wolaita	12
3	Melatsemu	F	18	Grade 3	Wolaita	13
4	Meaza	F	18	Grade 10	Wollo	9
5	Hanna	F	19	Grade 2	Ambo	12
6	Kenziya	F	18	Grade 4	Ginchi	15
7	Derartu	F	18	Grade 2	Gimbi	13



## HOSANA

### I. Employers

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Marital status	work	Remark
1	LemlemHabte	F	37	Grade 8	Married	Restaurant owner	
2	SelamHabte	F	28	Grade 7	Divorced	Hotel owner	
3.	Kebede	M	43	Grade 9	Married	Hotel owner	
4	Ayelech	F	33	Grade 8	Married	Breakfast house	
5	Tiringo	F	36	Grade 8	Married	Hotel owner	

## II Middlemen/women

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Work experience as "legal" brokers
1	Ewnetu	M	34	MA degree	2 years
2	Mohammed	M	53	No schooling	13 years
3	Mulugeta	M	44	Grade 10	2 years
4	Anboneh	M	25	BA degree	1 year
5	Solomon	M	28	BA Degree	4 years
6	Fekadu	M	36	BA Degree	3 years

## III domestic workers

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Place of origin	Age at first work (years)
1.	Arega	M	22	Grade 6	Hadiya Zone	10
2	Milkesa	M	17	Grade 5	Wolaita Zone	13
3	Mihiret	F	15	Grade 5	Wolaita Zone	14
4	Addisu	M	23	No schooling	Wolaita Zone	14
5	Aman	M	20	Grade 6	Wolaita Zone	12
6	Wondesen	M	24	Grade 1	Hosa'ena	13
7	Marta	F	15	Grade 5	Hosa'ena	7
8	Demeke	M	17	Grade 10	Hosa'ena	14
9	Isaq	M	15	Grade 1	Hosa'ena	13

## WOLAITA

### I. Employers

	Name	Sex	Age	Education completed	Marital status	work	Number of children
1	AskalechLetsa	F	35	BA Degree	Married	Hotel	4
2	SelamAlemu	F	37	Grade 8	Married	Tea room	3
3.	Mebrat	F	28	Grade 10	Single	<i>Jebena Buna</i>	-
4	Meseret	F	31	Grade 9	Single	Breakfast house	-
5	Helen	F	24	Level II	Married	Restaurant	-

6.	Kassech	F	40	Level IV	Married	Bar	4
7	BerhanAklilu	F	45	Diploma	Married	Traditional drinks house	5

## II Middlemen/women

	Name	Sex	age	Education completed	Work experience as "legal" brokers
1	BirhanuChele	M	45	Degree	13 years
2	Ermias	M	44	Grade 8	3 months
3	Mulu	M	43	Degree	4 months
4	Mebratu	M	39	Degree	6 years
5	Gebre	M	43	Grade 9	3 years
6					

## III domestic workers

	Name	Sex	age	Education completed	Place of origin	Age at first work	Remark
1.	Simeon Male	M	38	Grade 8	West Abaya, Gamo Zone	14	Met at a brokers house
2	Aster (Pseudonym)	F	13	No schooling	Wolaita zone	13	Met at a brokers house
3	Bertukan (Pseudonym)	F	12	No school	Wolaita Zone	12	Met at bus station
4	Samrawit	F	14	No school	Wolaita Zone	14	Met at bus station
5	Meseret	F	14	No school	Wolaita Zone	14	Met at bus station
6	EphremPetros	M	13	Grade 4	Wolaita Zone	14	Met as a broker carries him to employers