



Combating Modern Day Slavery: Breaking the Chains of Exploitative Child Labor

Report on the Policy Dialogue Workshop



Addis Ababa
28th July, 2022

**“Combating Modern Day Slavery: Breaking the
Chains of Exploitative Child Labor”**

Report on the Policy Dialogue Workshop organized by the Organization for
Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

**Addis Ababa,
28th of July 2022**

Acronyms

AAU	Addis Ababa University
DOT.	Digital Opportunity Trust
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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The policy dialogue workshop was held on the 28th of July 2022 in Addis Ababa. The event started with welcoming remarks from **Mr. Alemu Tesfaye**, followed by **Prof. Zelealem Liyew**, Resident Vice President of the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

Opening Remarks

Prof. Zelealem welcomed all participants to the workshop on combating modern day slavery and proceeded to an introduction of his organization and its purpose. OSSREA was established, in 1980, when the Addis Ababa University (AAU) encountered difficulty in carrying out researches due to individualism and lack of thoroughness.

Nowadays, OSSREA has created and provided a platform for academics to conduct outstanding studies. Through the researches, the organization aims to improve policy making and development planning, which will enhance the life of the African people.

Ethiopia is one of the source, transit and destination country of trafficking and child labor. Prof. Zelealem added that in Ethiopia child labor has not been given sufficient attention. He concluded his introduction by expressing his gratitude to the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) for its support in the researches.

Mr. Alemu Tesfaye gave the participants the opportunity to present themselves. The workshop was attended by guests from different institutions such as: the Women and Children Affairs bureau, AAU and the Labor and Industry Office. Moreover, the event was attended also by representatives of the Federal Police office, the Department of Justice and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Guests came also from the Addis Ketema, Kirkos and Gullele sub cities of Addis Ababa.

Presentation on Drivers of the Demand for Child Labor

The session started with **Dr. Desalegn Amsalu's** introduction of the research conducted by OSSREA. He stated that previous researches carried out in Ethiopia gave attention only to the push factors of child labor. He emphasized the need to study also the pull factors of the problem. "The study on the Drivers of the Demand of Child labor: case study of Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita" was conducted between September and October 2021. In the study, more attention has been given to the cities of Hosana and Wolaita.

He informed the audience that both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in order to carry out the study. The qualitative method was used to gather insight on the labor that deprived children from their childhood, their potential and dignity. Whereas, the quantitative technique was applied to collect data regarding the working age of children in Ethiopia.

Dr. Desalegn Amsalu reemphasized the fact that previous researches paid less attention to the difference between pull and push factors. Brokers, victims and employers of Addis Ababa, Hosana and Wolaita were interviewed for



the research purpose. The study findings show the factors influencing the demand side of child labor, the impact of former interventions and provide recommendations for the future. He said that the objective of the study is to influence policies. He added that the research should be considered as a baseline survey.

Dr. Desalegn Amsalu expressed that findings illustrate that children are hired for the following businesses:

- 1) **Tea rooms**, especially in Hosana and Wolaita, are located next to construction areas in order to better serve day workers.
- 2) **Breakfast houses** tend to employ girls.
- 3) In **Hotels and Restaurants** children tend to be hired for cleaning purposes or to work in the kitchen. At first sight, a person might get the impression that underage children are not involved in hotels and restaurants because they work at the backstage.
- 4) Moreover, Prof. Zelealem added that underage children can be found also working in “**Jebena Bunna or street coffee vending.**” In the jebena bunna, girls assist the coffee maker.
- 5) In addition, a number of underage girls work as **household maids** specially in Addis Ababa. Families send their children to their relative in Addis Ababa believing that their girls will continue their education.
- 6) Furthermore, female children work as **waitress**.
- 7) The “**Hulegeb**” service meaning mixed service, implies the implementation of different kind of jobs. The “Hulegeb” service is mostly done by girls, but also boys.

Dr. Desalegn Amsalu restated that attention has been given to the demand driving factors. He said that the first question the study wanted to address is the reason why employers are more likely to hire children for their jobs. According to the findings, employers prefer to hire children because of their **low wages** and their adaptability compared to older people. Therefore, although they have means, they prefer to exploit young workers instead of hiring qualified workers. The second factor influencing the driver side of the demand is **the culture**. **Dr. Desalegn** stated that there is a cultural acceptance of child labor due to the fact that families tend to have more children than they can support.

The third factor about child labor that attracts employers is the **physical factor**. Children are considered less harmful, can work for long hours and they quickly adapt to new environment. They are fast learners and do not ask permission to have days off. That being the case, **Dr. Desalegn** added that employers would likely hire children than teenagers who will ask them for days off. On that account, children are deemed to be appropriate for informal jobs.



According to **Dr. Desalegn Amsalu**, the research focused on the impact of former interventions on child labor prevention. On that account, interviewed brokers have affirmed that they have taken frequent trainings on the issue of child labor and that they are aware of the fact that child labor is illegal. He stated that, nonetheless, brokers justified their actions. During the interviews there were brokers who were convinced that it was good for children to work instead of becoming street beggars. Moreover, there were brokers who mentioned that children themselves approached them looking for jobs. Dr. Desalegn said that out of 6 brokers interviewed in Hosana, only one had a legal license. He concluded by saying that less has been done on the part of the victims and employers who did not receive any kind of trainings.

He then followed his presentation by introducing the recommendations of the policy brief. He suggested all organizations and institutions to work on the economic problem and also **change in attitude**. In addition, he stated that although an impact on the culture might require a long time, organizations could work to change the attitude of people towards child labor. **Dr. Desalegn Amsalu** suggested to create awareness on the issue using videos. He added that videos on the reality of child labor in our society could be more impactful tools to create awareness during sensitization events.

Moreover, organizations should work on **poverty alleviation**. Based on the findings, poverty influences not only the supply side, but also the demand side of child labor.

Dr. Desalegn Amsalu argued that the issue of household servants is difficult to address because hired children are perceived as members of the new hosting family. He built on the issue by saying that there are no laws that could regulate that kind of relationship. Moreover, he mentioned the lack of barriers between household chores and the business run by the same hiring family. Household maids might be requested to do house chores as well as be involved in the business run by their hosting family.

He added that there are grey areas in the law that need to be addressed. For instance, he mentioned the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child does not differentiate the labor market as a source of child rights violation. Also, he said that the Ethiopian law is silent on the issue of domestic child workers. He continued stating the necessity to impose schooling obligation to employers hiring kids. Moreover, the law should differentiate between child labor and child work.

With regard to the policy recommendations, **Dr. Desalegn Amsalu**, stated that all stakeholders should work to address the gaps in the implementation of the child labor law. He stated that labor inspection is limited and that **corruption** should be fought. Furthermore, he argued that **population growth** should be controlled even though we tend to say that population is wealth. For instance, Dr. Desalegn said that a family composed of 7 children and



with limited economic means to take care of them, will send the children away to look for a job.

Dr. Desalegn Amsalu stated that stakeholders' actions should be coordinated through a platform. He stated that in order to fight child labor, the law should be enforced in all sectors especially in the transport sector. Also, he added that government offices should ensure that brokers meet all expected requirements to obtain a license. Dr. Desalegn Amsalu concluded arguing that child labor cannot be immediately eliminated. It is a long commitment process that needs to focus on the factors influencing the demand.

Mr. Alemu Tesfaye intervened to give the floor to **Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw**, Country Representative and Senior Programme Advisor-Ethiopia from the Woord en Daad Foundation. Mr. Ephrem informed the audience that the Combating Modern Slavery (CMS) consortium is composed of 5 organizations. The organizations involved in the implementation of the project are Hope for Justice and Justice for all, Hiwot Integrated Development Organization, Digital Opportunity Trust, OSSREA and Woord en Daad Foundation.

In addition, **Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw** added that the consortium is working on a 3-year program, in which OSSREA does research and evaluation. The project focuses on Ethiopia's Southern Corridor to Wolayita where there are children at risk of enslavement. In this project Woord en Daad Foundation aims to assist 1300 children by sending them to rehabilitation centers.

Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw asked the audience to come up with better ways to address the issue of child labor.

Discussion

The first speaker stated the organization he works for focuses on forced labor, advocacy and that the organization uses sensitization through media to address a larger audience. He added that the organization prepares meetings of stakeholders on issues about modern slavery. Interventions should be sped up since the commitment to end slavery is by 2025.

A representative from the Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT), stated that his organization works on combating modern slavery. He thanked OSSREA for the thorough research conducted on the thematic. According to him, Ethiopia is the 4th country in the world due to the widespread child labor. As a matter of fact, 16 million children are subject to domestic child labor. The speaker mentioned the fact that religious leaders should take part in meetings, since they do play key roles in southern Ethiopia. Also, he added that in Wolayita there are no role models except for people who migrated to Southern Africa.



The speaker added that in Hadiya, Gamo, Wolaita if a child disappears no one goes to the police to report the fact, contrary to a stolen goat. In conclusion, he suggested that work coordination mechanisms should involve police and religious leaders.

A spokesperson from Hiwot Integrated Development Organization stated that the research was good. A question was raised on the reasons why the research did not include the works done by underage children in Addis Ababa. Finally, the participant suggested to include parenting skills in family planning training.

A spokeswoman from Mission for Community Development stated that her organization has extensive experience on the issue of combating child labor. The organization has worked for 20 years on the subject matter and has done advocacy to influence policies. She added that children start working at the age of 7.

Among the participants, a person emphasized on the need to use a multifaceted approach to solve the problem involving multiple partners to the project. The participant questioned the reasons why climate change and conflicts were not considered as pushing factors. Furthermore, a representative, from the Women and Children Affairs of Addis Ababa, commented that the issue of child labor should be contextualized.

The floor was then taken by **Dr. Desalegn Amsalu** who responded to the raised questions by acknowledging the fact that numerous children are engaged in handicraft, waving and other activities in Addis Ababa. He stated nonetheless that the aim of the research was to focus on Hosana and Wolaita. Climate change as well as conflict were not considered as factors causing child labor because the study focused on the demand side of the issue. He concluded by saying that in order to contextualize the issue of child labor, a starting point should be the international law.

Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw added that the presence of non-coordinated organizations working to tackle child labor will not be effective. He highlighted the need for a national coordination mechanism. Also, it was emphasized that each organization and institution with his own objective and agenda can contribute to the achievement of the goal. Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw asked the audience ways in which each participant could be involved to address the issue. He added that religious leaders and private sectors representatives were not present in the workshop. At the end of his intervention, he asked the participants to think about which institution would best fit to take the role of a leader.

The floor was then open to discussion. A representative from the Gullele sub city, bureau of Women and Children's Affairs, stated that a number of NGOs work on information, awareness creation and capacity building. Nonetheless,



the impact of their activity is not tangible. In addition, he revealed the existence of various consortiums working on the issue of child labor that lack coordination. The spokesperson mentioned the case of “Kitcha customary law” of the Gurage region. He explained that Kitcha is a cultural norm imposing punishments for those families who send their children to work in the cities. It is enforced by elders in the zone. The participant suggested to replicate this good practice in other cities. He ended his intervention by asking the audience whether organizations should work on new policies or enhance the existing ones.

A spokesperson from the justice department mentioned the fact that each Killil, regional state of Ethiopia, has the mandate to draft laws as long as they are in line with the national law. In conclusion, the participant affirmed that his department can contribute with the analysis and production of laws.

Another participant added that the justice sector is well aware about child labor and that it has conducted meetings on the subject. He informed the participants that his bureau has already established 6 working groups and defined their jobs.

The floor was given to **Mr. Ephrem Shiferaw** who stated that Woord en Daad Foundation will continue to address the issue by doing further studies on the matter, by expanding the involvement of other stakeholders and by strengthening the coordination body.

Mr. Alemu Tesfaye concluded by thanking the audience for its insights and by underlining the relevance of customary laws.

Closing Remarks

To sum up, **Prof. Zelalem Liyew** expressed his opinion on the terms used to represent child labor. In his opinion, the term slavery was a very strong word and that the appropriate term to be used for child labor should be Modern Day Slavery.

Furthermore, he said that families, people at the grassroot level and organizations such as the African Union and UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund) should be involved in addressing the issue. Children rights are violated through early marriages, illegal labor and so forth.

Nonetheless, the positive side of child labor should be considered. For examples, he mentioned that some hosting families provide education to the girls working for them. He stated that policies should be reviewed and should embrace good practices of neighboring countries. He ended his speech thanking the participants on behalf of OSSREA.