

Ethiopia Hotspot

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Operating context

In 2015, the Ethiopia hotspot made substantial strides towards preventing unsafe migration and trafficking of women and girls in the five woreda (district) targeted by the hotspot in Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa. The hotspot is working in one of the most poverty stricken sub-cities (neighbourhoods) within Addis Ababa to provide potential migrants the awareness, skills training, economic empowerment, and psychosocial support they need to measurably decrease their risk of abuse and exploitation when migrating to the Middle East for domestic work.

Since the Ethiopia hotspot was launched in July 2015, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) has led three major legal and policy changes to combat unsafe migration and trafficking of women and girls. The first one is a new piece of legislation passed by the Ethiopian Parliament which targets illegal brokers participating in human trafficking. The GOE is also currently developing new bilateral agreements with different governments to provide measures that ensure the safety of its citizens abroad. To date, the GOE has made agreements with the governments of Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan.

On 29 December 2015, one of the two parliamentary chambers of Ethiopia, the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR), passed the New Overseas Employment Proclamation. This legislation enables Ethiopians to migrate for domestic work in the Middle East by lifting the ban on domestic worker migration to the region introduced in October 2013. The lifting of the ban will create an opportunity for the Freedom Fund hotspot program to offer a more comprehensive range of support to prospective and returnee migrants by providing options for both safer migration and improved opportunities within Ethiopia. The proclamation states that in order to be eligible for overseas employment, an individual is expected to complete at least eighth grade, take three months of vocational training in domestic work, and pass a skills examination to earn a certificate. The entire process is expected to take at least six months. However, migrants who have returned to Ethiopia and want to re-migrate to the Middle East are only expected to pass the skills examination.

Our hotspot partners are now eagerly awaiting the GOE's detailed directives and criteria for legal migration of domestic workers to the Middle East. Once these have been clarified, partners will work towards supporting the GOE in its efforts to prepare women and girls with the necessary skills and knowledge to experience positive outcomes from migration.



- **7,134 individuals provided with information about unsafe migration and trafficking**
In 2015, 7,134 individuals increased their understanding of how to prevent unsafe migration and trafficking whilst migrating to the Middle East for domestic work. The target groups were potential migrant groups made of commercial sex workers, domestic workers, schoolgirls, and low-income women, as well as returned migrants. Key information on migration, such as existing legal frameworks, risks to illegal migration, and emphasis on the skills and education necessary for overseas employment when the ban on migration is lifted, was provided to women and girls.
- **41 Community “Safer Migration” (Freedom) Groups supported with 1,665 members**
A number of community group structures were created and strengthened to address unsafe migration and trafficking, engage target communities in the issue of safer migration, and create platforms for continued action. Approaches included creating self-help savings and loans groups and cooperatives, developing awareness of unsafe migration with potential migrants to reduce the risk of trafficking. ‘Community Conversation (CC) groups’ were also created to facilitate regular discussion, group consensus, and grassroots solutions about ways to protect women and girls against unsafe migration. In addition, ‘multi-sectoral groups’ have been formed which are comprised of local leaders from different sectors including women and youth associations, traditional elders, teachers, police, and local government. One multi-sector group has been established within each of the five project districts, and all have received training, created action plans, and begun to establish referral mechanisms for vulnerable girls and women and migrant returnees to access necessary services from the government and other agencies and organisations.
- **181 victims and survivors accessed recovery services**
Survivors of human trafficking received psychosocial support through Freedom Fund partner AGAR’s residential centre. Survivors were provided with comprehensive services including shelter, food, clothing, hygiene materials, and medical support such as psychiatric treatments and intensive counselling to help them recover from mental trauma and avoid falling back into situations of extreme exploitation.
- **69 individuals graduated from vocational training**
Partners provided three to six months of vocational training through private sector institutions leading to employment in Ethiopia driving taxis, tailoring, poultry farming, and working in childcare, hotel and tourism, beauty salons, and leather production. In addition, select partners have also provided strategic upskilling opportunities for local domestic workers from Addis Ababa to increase their skills in order to be better prepared for domestic work in the Middle East. These partners have chosen to work with a

vocational centre that provides comprehensive housekeeping training using modern appliances, cooking classes, and time management and other life skills. Through this training, Addis Ababa-based domestic workers have been empowered to better negotiate their salary and working hours and now possess the skill level employers have requested, both of which will decrease the risks of abuse and exploitation in the Middle East if they choose to migrate.

- **176 previously out-of-school children attending classes.**

Partners implemented various approaches to support vulnerable girl students with potential to migrate, including the establishment and training of five anti-dropout committees that monitor and trace dropout girls in the community and provide material and psychosocial support to ensure they are able to reintegrate into classes and complete their education. These anti-dropout committees include parents, teachers, principals, traditional community elders, and local social workers who have become active champions of prevention of unsafe migration and trafficking. This approach has reached 176 girls with the support they need to return to school.

Addressing systemic drivers of slavery

Throughout 2015, partner organisations have begun advocacy efforts to help the GOE consider the future role of civil society organisations in actively supporting migrants to be well-equipped as domestic workers and empowered as women before migrating to the Middle East. This includes supporting policy changes and planning to conduct pre-departure training when the migration ban is lifted. Partners conducted national and sub-city level public forums with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), the government ministry in charge of preventing unsafe migration and trafficking in Ethiopia. One such event organised by partners was a panel discussion with Addis Ababa government offices on “Collaborative responses to prevent unsafe migration: practice, lessons, challenges and the way forward”. All Freedom Fund partners presented and used the panel discussion to push for conceptual clarity on current migration and trafficking policies which are not offering the level of protection needed by potential migrants. Partners also shared their views on the importance of civil society’s role and provided input into drafting policies and creating the national taskforce on trafficking. From these events, and many relationship-building meetings with government, Freedom Fund partners were catalysts to a joint government and civil society regional forum on migration and trafficking that will launch in 2016. Our aim is for this forum to continue to strengthen relationships, allow sharing of information and resources among practitioners and policy makers, and facilitate discussion about the realities of migrant practices with a wider range of stakeholders in order to influence policies for safer migration.

In 2015, partners made significant progress in economic empowerment activities to increase income amongst the poorest households in target areas, provide livelihood opportunities for reintegrated victims of human trafficking and exploited migrants, and prevent rushed and thus risky decision-making amongst potential migrants. Partners report that for vulnerable girls, women, and returned migrants, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCOs) have served as platforms for both economic empowerment and information-sharing on unsafe migration. Partners have been encouraged by the positive responses and social cohesion created through the SACCOs and SHGs, with many low income women internalising the issue of unsafe migration and willingly becoming champions of the issue in their communities.

In addition to technical and economic empowerment activities, all partners delivered trainings and counselling to increase psychosocial and interpersonal skills, assertiveness, self-confidence, communication, self-management, and negotiation and conflict management skills otherwise known as ‘life skills’, to vulnerable migrant girls and women and victims of human trafficking. The aim in providing

psychosocial support and life skills training is to enhance the ability of potential migrants to make informed decisions and plan accordingly if they choose to migrate to the Middle East for domestic work; for returned migrants, the process helps them cope better with the demands and challenges of everyday life back in Ethiopia.

Enhancing civil society capacity

- **Community of practice strengthened**

Hotspot partners have come together in a community of practice to improve coordination and network building. The model has been fully embraced by partners and is already showing an increase in partners' effectiveness. This is a new concept in Ethiopia, where in the past NGOs have not strategically worked together under the umbrella of one program in a geographically-focussed area of a few selected woredas.

- **Increased commitment of regional BOLSA and the Women, Children and Youth Office to, and collaboration with, the Freedom Fund program and civil society organisations working on safer migration**

Partners developed a close working relationship with the two regional Addis Ababa government offices responsible for safer migration and anti-trafficking activities—the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BOLSA) and the Women, Children and Youth Office. This is significant in the first year of such a sensitive program in Ethiopia, especially in the absence of a forum enabling local NGOs to access national-level government on issues of trafficking and migration. The development of a safer migration regional forum in the next year will be central to solidifying these efforts and directly influencing government.

- **Increased conceptual clarity among partners on safer migration and trafficking**

As safer migration and trafficking is an emerging sector in Ethiopia, our partners are the first local organisations to work on these issues. We have worked to increase partners' understanding, familiarity, ownership, and creative thinking to implement interventions aimed at safer migration in preparation of the legal migration proclamation taking effect. We have also worked with partners to develop messaging aimed at different hotspot target groups at risk of unsafe migration. Partners will continue to shape and refine their behavioural change messaging, based on a review of effective and ineffective tactics and emerging research findings.

- **Creation of rights-based migration resources**

Safer migration resources aimed at source communities do not currently exist in Ethiopia. We are supporting the creation of materials on prevention of unsafe migration and anti-trafficking for wide dissemination. Resources include a training-of-trainers guide for community facilitators focused on communication of concepts of safer migration and anti-trafficking and a guide for 'community conversations' to promote dialogues with the wider community on safer migration using case studies and key information from returnees.

Learning

- **Opportunities will evolve over time to shape rights-based discourse whilst supporting an emerging civil society within the new safer migration and anti-trafficking sector**

We are working with our partners to build their knowledge and create materials on safer migration and anti-trafficking that are relevant to Ethiopia's unique context. It is important to note that this will take time, as these materials are being created for the first time, need to be informed by evidence and should

respond to the changes in context. The partners need conceptual clarity and technical assistance themselves before this knowledge and practice can be transferred to communities and impact observed.

- **Hotspot target groups have been shown to be the most vulnerable to unsafe migration and trafficking**

Reliable evidence on the most relevant groups of women and girls to target for safer migration programming in Ethiopia did not exist when we launched the program in July 2015; anecdotal evidence indicated however that commercial sex workers (CSWs), schoolgirls, low-income women, and domestic workers in Addis Ababa were the potential migrants most vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in the Middle East. A partner-led baseline survey on the demographic composition of the project sites confirmed the relevance of all target groups.

- **Ensuring employment linkages for market-relevant vocational training increases value**

During the initial period of the program, the major challenge in developing effective vocational training was ensuring job placement post-training. As a result, partners now require that the vocational training centres to which they refer beneficiaries provide job linkages or job placement for at least 50% of the beneficiaries as a minimum standard for continued partnership. This has increased the quality and value of the training and longer-term support for returnees who have been able to access unique and growing sectors such hotels, tourism, and driving centres.

- **Survivors of human trafficking are volunteering as ‘change agents’ in the community to support prevention of unsafe migration and trafficking**

All partners worked with survivors of human trafficking who had graduated from services and who were interested in becoming ‘change agents’ by sharing their own experiences and testimonies of migration. This was shown to be an effective strategy, especially for potential migrants who were able to gain first-hand information from returnees on the challenges of working in the Middle East and what they should prepare for if they choose to migrate. Partners reported that the potential migrants’ groups that engaged with returnees have expressed increased understanding migration for domestic work in the Middle East. This includes understanding potential exposure to language barriers, modern appliances, varying household sizes, deception from brokers, exposure to sexual abuse, and challenges in negotiating salaries and overburden of work.

- **Life skills training will be key for the 2016 program**

The ban on migration for domestic workers migrating to the Middle East has been a challenge for partners, as they were only able to provide messaging for those who were migrating legally. However, throughout this ban period, the significance of life skills training for potential migrants was highlighted as being key to providing potential migrants with the self-awareness, critical thinking, decision-making abilities, communication skills, and coping mechanisms that will make them better able to make informed decisions about migrating and responding to challenges en route to and upon arrival in the Middle East.

Looking ahead

Key priorities have been identified for 2016, including:

- **Continue to increase partners’ understanding of the hotspot theory of change**

As the ban on migration is now lifted in Ethiopia and legal migration is a valid option for women, we will continue to work with partners to provide technical assistance in refining the hotspot’s strategy to increase the safety of the migration of women and girls. We will support trainings and workshops to push the conceptual thinking of the purpose behind different activities, such as livelihood support, that do not

only aim to support women who stay in Ethiopia but also provide potential migrants with the skills they need for positive experiences when migrating.

- **Launch of a second project site in Northern Ethiopia within the hotspot program**

In mid-2016, we will launch a second project site within the Ethiopia hotspot program, focusing on the northern region of Amhara as a source and transit site for unsafe migration and trafficking. We will work with an additional five to seven partners who will complement the work in Addis Ababa to increase the impact and reach of the overall hotspot in Ethiopia.

- **Strengthen safer migration messaging based on LSHTM's formative research**

Partners will work with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to incorporate findings from the formative research that will reveal factors reported by returned migrants as key to increasing their positive experiences of migrating to the Middle East as domestic workers. These key factors will help to both inform the Amhara regional project site interventions and support the hotspot-wide messaging on what can make women and girls' experiences of migration safer.

- **Conduct capacity building trainings and workshops to strengthen and standardise key components of partners' work**

In 2016, partners' technical and organisational capacity will be supported through training and technical assistance on mental health and psychosocial models of care and treatment for victims of human trafficking; trauma-informed standards of care; behavioural change communication on safer migration; and life skills training curriculum support.