



ETHIOPIA

Child domestic work hotspot report

August 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Ethiopia, the Freedom Fund works with local partners on two hotspot programs: safer migration and child domestic work. This report covers progress and outcomes during 2023 from our child domestic work program, which aims to improve child domestic workers' working conditions and reduce child domestic servitude in Addis Ababa.

In 2023, our hotspot partners continued to shift attitudes among families, communities and employers in order to reduce exploitation and improve conditions for child domestic workers (CDWs). Almost 1,600 employers were directly reached by partners in 2023, leading to significant improvements in attitudes towards CDWs. A new Child Rights curriculum reached 225 children of employers, raising awareness about the rights of the CDWs they live with and equipping them to become child rights champions with their parents, their peers at school and their communities. Important changes for CDWs have included reduced working hours and improved access to services like education and medical care.

Almost 5,000 children accessed services in 2023 through our partners, with 329 receiving shelter and 144 reintegrated with their families. Other support included life skills training, access to education, and the creation of a community safe space for CDWs to access further services and support.

Partners continued to work with communities and local authorities to raise awareness, identify at-risk CDWs and refer them to appropriate services. Nearly 60 *Iddirs* (community groups) instituted protective measures, including introducing bylaws banning abuse and exploitation. Partners supported local-level prevention and response task forces, provided training on protection frameworks and case management to local authorities, and assisted with 42 prosecutions of perpetrators of abuse and exploitation (leading to 19 convictions – double the number of convictions compared to 2022).

Our hotspot program also supported civil society advocacy for enhanced protections and improved legislative frameworks, including the new National Alternative Childcare Guideline. Our partner Hope for Justice helped design the guideline, which brings together 34 organisations to ensure comprehensive services for vulnerable children like CDWs.



OPERATING CONTEXT

Escalation of tension and conflicts. In 2023, despite the end of the war between Federal forces and the Tigray Liberation Front, clashes between the defence forces and local militias have resulted in civilian deaths and displacement. Nationally, over four million Ethiopians have been internally displaced by conflict.

Economic and funding pressures. In addition to internal conflict, Ethiopia has experienced extended drought and high inflation in 2023, making more families – and their children in particular – vulnerable to exploitation. There was intensifying pressure on families to send children from impoverished rural areas to urban areas, including to undertake child domestic work. Conflict also continues to affect reunification of child domestic workers (CDWs) with their families. This puts greater pressure on the capacity of shelters to accommodate children for a long period of time. Shelters continue to struggle for funding. During the year, our partner Bethany Christian Services Global (BCSG) took the difficult decision to close down its shelter, while Hope for Justice had to merge two shelters to reduce running costs.

International funding gap in assistance to Ethiopia. By March 2023, the US government had pledged a total of US \$778 million to provide basic needs for people displaced by conflict, drought and food insecurity. However, according to the Ethiopian government, with the situation worsening, US \$3.2 billion is required in 2024 for humanitarian assistance to 15.5 million Ethiopians.



HOTSPOT OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Headline results



Almost 1,600 employers were directly reached by partners, leading to improvements in employers' attitudes towards and treatment of CDWs.



225 children of employers completed our innovative Child Rights curriculum, equipping them to advocate for the rights of the CDWs that they live with.



Almost 5,000 children accessed services, with 329 children provided with shelter and comprehensive services and 144 children reintegrated with their families.



Local-level initiatives to raise awareness and identify and support at-risk children included nearly 60 *Iddirs* (community groups) instituting protective measures, including introducing bylaws banning abuse and exploitation.



Partners provided legal support to CDWs on issues ranging from unpaid salaries to sexual abuse, and assisted with 42 prosecutions of perpetrators of abuse and exploitation (leading to 19 convictions – double the number of convictions compared to 2022).

Progress towards hotspot objectives

Hotspot Objective 1: Influencing the behaviour of key stakeholders, primarily formal and informal recruiters, transporters and employers

- **Almost 1,600 employers were directly reached by partners in 2023.** Several partners now use the interface meeting approach. Interface meetings occur over three days, firstly engaging employers and CDWs in separate conversations to unpack issues, and then in a collective discussion that proposes solutions. These sessions are a crucial opportunity to engage employers and CDWs on child rights. One partner noted: *"It was encouraging to observe that some of the participants acknowledged unintentionally mistreating and exploiting CDWs. The training helped them understand their legal obligations and responsibilities, enabling them to promote better working and living conditions."* As a result of these meetings, 111 previously out-of-school CDWs were enrolled in the Alternative Basic Education program.
- **Improvement of employers' attitudes to child domestic workers.** An evaluation of the hotspot campaign about issues CDWs showed significant improvement in attitudes. The results revealed:
 - Heightened responsibility among employers regarding the education of CDWs: 85% of respondents exposed to the campaign reported that it had made employers in their community feel more responsible for CDWs' education. In 2023, according to monitoring data collected by the hotspot, 81% of CDWs reported that they currently go to school.
 - The average workday for CDWs, as reported by employers, decreased from 8.8 hours at the baseline to 7.8 at endline.
 - Employers who had some exposure to the campaign were more likely to see public holidays and weekly rest days as valid reasons for giving CDWs time off.

- **Strengthening community structures to create effective referral pathways.** Partners have enabled community leaders to identify CDWs at risk and refer them to appropriate services. Additionally, *Iddir* leaders are using local bylaws to enforce the fair treatment of CDWs including supporting their access to education and rest time. As of December 2023, almost 60 *Iddirs* have instituted bylaws including protection provisions such as:

 - banning and addressing child abuse, exploitation and violence in all circumstances
 - rescuing and supporting children who are living in difficult situations, particularly CDWs
 - closely working with the local authorities, schools and civil society organisations (CSOs) to address the issue
 - disseminating information to the wider community.

- **Improving CDW representation and voice in decisions that affect them.** Our partner MCDP built a collaborative space between domestic workers' associations, CDWs, ex-CDWs, and *Iddir* leaders to enhance community awareness about the rights of CDWs and to incorporate issues relating to child domestic work in *Iddir* bylaws. MCDP enables CDWs to take an active part in the meetings, through separate workshops on how to voice one's opinions. CDWs have reported that connecting with ex-CDWs was an important learning experience that has improved their hopes for the future.

- **Engaging informal recruiters as change agents.** Recruiters are now taking an active role in implementing employment agreements and conducting follow-up to keep track of CDWs they have placed. This has led to the formation of a Safe Recruitment Centre in one of the woredas (districts) to ensure that only children of legal age for work are being placed. Protective measures like separate bank accounts and school enrolment are also being pursued by recruiters that partners have worked with.

- **Using transport workers to identify at-risk and unaccompanied children at bus depots.** Engagement with transport workers is a crucial way to identify and refer at-risk children. Repeated discussions with transport workers have brought common understanding of the signs to look out for. They have created safe waiting areas in bus stations for children to stay in while authorities are contacted. Bus drivers have put up posters. Up to 60 children per quarter are referred to further services.

- **Roll-out of an innovative Child Rights curriculum to engage children of employers.** Deeply ingrained social norms mean that the children of employers typically have negative attitudes toward the CDW in their home. The curriculum, designed by the Freedom Fund and our partners, includes interactive exercises, storytelling, role plays and action planning. By raising awareness about the rights of CDWs, it aims to ensure CDWs are recognised as fellow children, with care and support needs equivalent to any other child, and to equip children of employers with knowledge and skills so that they can advocate for the rights of CDWs with their parents (the employers), their peers at school and their communities. During the year, 225 children completed the curriculum, with 20-25% identified as child rights champions who are implementing the action plans they developed. Important changes for CDWs have included reduced working hours and improved access to services like education and medical care. More data on the impact of this approach will be available in 2024.



Hotspot Objective 2: Improving government ability to monitor child domestic workers' conditions

- **Collaboration between local government and partners to institutionalise protections for CDWs.** Actions from government have included:
 - A commitment by the Education Bureau to create dedicated learning spaces for CDWs within schools, assign facilitators for activities with CDWs, provide scholastic materials, and employ supervisors to oversee teaching. The Bureau has agreed to organise training for facilitators and to allocate a budget for these dedicated learning spaces in schools.
 - Discussions are underway for the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs to fully adopt the community safe space model (see below under Hotspot Objective 4 for further information) throughout their existing youth centre work.
- **Coordinating district-level CDW prevention and response task forces.** Child rights committees in some *woredas* have been activated through training by partners. Participants include representatives from various government institutions, as well as religious leaders and community leaders. These task forces have now started door-to-door house visits, following our partner PADET's model, using checklists and follow-up protocols to ensure that children's issues are addressed and legal action taken where appropriate.
- **Establishment of a proactive referral system in collaboration with woreda-level Women, Child, and Social Affairs Offices to identify and assist at-risk children.** Partners have conducted training covering topics including: Ethiopian and international frameworks for protection of CDWs; child development; and case management for CDWs. Partners have observed a notable improvement in the level of concern about CDW issues. This has led to better response times and follow-up by government offices. Challenges remain, such as inadequate documentation submitted to the justice office, lack of collaboration among officials, and budget shortages.
- **Prosecution of perpetrators of abuse and exploitation.** Partners provided legal support to CDWs on issues ranging from unpaid salaries to sexual abuse. In 2023, 42 cases have been assisted by partners with 19 convictions (double the number of convictions compared to 2022). Both of the shelters run by our partners now employ a legal officer, and a group of prosecution experts was set up to suggest improvements to how cases can be pursued, including using the Human Trafficking law. Since July, partners have been conducting Victim of Trafficking Assessments to better demonstrate the links between internal trafficking and CDW exploitation. So far, a majority of assessments have met the criteria for human trafficking. Partners intend to use this data to guide the Bureau of Justice's approach to CDW cases in order to improve the categorisation of cases opened by prosecutors.

Hotspot Objective 3: Supporting CSO advocacy capacity to improve government responsiveness and the legislative framework, including mechanisms for children's participation in advocacy

- **Improving representation and voice of CDWs as part of wider worker organising.** The voice of CDWs has started to be heard in policy spaces as part of the Child Parliamentarians initiative. Importantly, partners have moved away from considering children solely as beneficiaries to centring CDWs' opinions and voices in their programs and advocacy. Examples include:
 - Following training delivered by our partners, Child Parliamentarians along with domestic workers' associations have requested the establishment of a discussion room with the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives. This would enable them to better advocate within the parliament.
 - Supported by our partners, Child Parliamentarians were able to present the issue of child domestic work in Art Media, a YouTube channel popular with young people.
 - Our partner MCDP has been working with the Justice Office, Women and Social Affairs Office, Child Parliamentarians, and domestic workers associations to advocate for the ratification of ILO Convention No.189 (on domestic work).
- **Civil society consultation on a key policy that affects CDWs.** Our partner Hope for Justice helped design the National Alternative Childcare Guideline to address CDW cases. The guideline is an initiative led by government bringing together 34 organisations. Hope for Justice has been leading the part of the guideline concerning reintegration. The purpose is to ensure comprehensive services with a better emphasis on vulnerable children like CDWs.
- **Use of the media to increase public awareness and government responsiveness to the issue of trafficking.** In 2023, the Freedom Fund established the first Media Advisory Group consisting of communication heads from the two key government ministries, an editor from state media, a representative from Addis Ababa University School of Journalism, and a journalist representing private media. The group's purpose is to provide guidance on improving visibility of issues relating to CDWs (and safer migration, the Freedom Fund's other Ethiopia hotspot program). During the year, activities included a visit by group members to the OPRIFS shelter to understand the needs of vulnerable children. This led to an increase in media coverage of trafficking of children.

Hotspot Objective 4: Improving the quality of services provided to at-risk child domestic workers and survivors, especially access to education and vocational training

- **Almost 5,000 children accessed services in 2023,** with 329 children provided with shelter and comprehensive services and 144 children reintegrated with their families. This large number of CDWs who benefited from access to services demonstrates the effectiveness of hotspot monitoring and referral of CDWs, as well as increased responsiveness from local authorities.
- **Provision of life skills and improving access to education for CDWs.** Achievements include:
 - Life skills training and health education has been provided to CDWs, offering a space for sharing experiences with each other, leading to heightened confidence and self-esteem. Many CDWs only speak their home language, creating communication barriers that hinder access to essential life skills training and counselling. To address this challenge, partners have engaged volunteers who can interpret local languages.
 - The protection of CDWs has been improved through strengthening school counselling services and through installing suggestion boxes at schools.

- To support CDWs with their education, partners provided scholastic and dignity kits for 1,334 existing and newly enrolled CDWs.
- In addition to formal education, some partners supported CDWs to attend vocational training colleges to give them a pathway out of domestic work. Resistance to this concept by employers has limited the number of children who are able to take up such opportunities. However, by summer 2023, 70 children had completed a vocational training course.
- **Creation of a safe space for CDWs.** In February 2023, a community safe space was launched as a place to build CDWs' skills, raise awareness of laws relating to children's rights, and connect them with services. The safe space supports CDWs to build relationships of trust, friendship and mentorship. During the year, a music trainer who is also a survivor visited the children and shared her experience, using role play and music. Our partner MCDP is now planning to engage her to provide music training for the CDWs.
- **Provision of comprehensive shelter, family tracing and reintegration services for CDWs.**
 - During the year, 329 CDWs received shelter services, including comprehensive psychosocial support and healthcare support. Cognitive behavioural therapy, role play and activity-based therapies are used to build children's trust in the shelter staff.
 - Family tracing and reintegration is another crucial aspect of shelter work. 144 children were reintegrated this year. In limited cases, older CDWs (age 17+) have been supported towards independent living in Addis Ababa, through shared accommodation.
 - Our partner BCSG conducted follow-up visits to 84 children who had been reintegrated with their families. Of these, 49% were enrolled in school, while the rest are currently waiting for registration in 2024. Only three children have resumed domestic work. One mother said: *"I have learnt the importance of treating my children peacefully from our meetings. There was also a briefing provided on how to discipline our children appropriately and positively. Thanks to the project I am better off in handling my kids in a more appropriate and positive way."*

SUPPORTING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

- 15 partner representatives held a workshop on 'Increasing engagement of survivors in the anti-slavery sector in Ethiopia'.
- OPRIFS, given its experience in community empowerment work, shared its experience with a relatively new partner by leading their first ever interface meeting for them. So far, five partners have adopted interface meetings and community conversation activities within their projects.
- The tool that MCDP designed to assess insights of CDWs was shared with all partners.
- Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development (MSD) and Hope for Children in Ethiopia – Relief and Development Association (HCE) jointly celebrated the annual World Child Day in collaboration with various organisations. This kind of collaboration assists partners in increasing influence with government.

CASE STUDY

Children of employers promote child rights for CDWs

In Gulele sub-city, Addis Ababa, Betty* – an adolescent CDW – endured very long working hours and harsh treatment from the entire family. She said that the employers aggressively demanded her services saying “Bring this!” or “Do that!” and that she was not given time off to go to school.

Our partner, MSD, reached out to the employers as well as to their daughter, Hiwot*, and they agreed to join a training session. The training, which aimed to raise awareness about the rights of CDWs, brought radical changes for Betty. Previously, Hiwot had mistreated Betty but with this new understanding and perspective, her behaviour was transformed. She realised that CDWs should be treated like any other child, and Hiwot began speaking up for a change in her own home and discussing these issues with her parents.

Hiwot played a crucial role in shifting the dynamics, and her parents then also underwent a remarkable transformation. Prior to the training, they viewed Betty as less worthy, but now they refer to Betty as a ‘supporter’ rather than as a domestic worker, which they feel is a way to affirm her dignity.

For her part, Betty is pleased at how her life has improved. She says that she now receives equal treatment, with reduced working hours (2-4 hours per day) and she has the same daily routine as Hiwot. She is learning to read and will soon have the opportunity to attend school alongside Hiwot.

This example of the change that children of employers can bring about shows why the hotspot is now promoting the use of the Child Rights curriculum in schools (see under Hotspot Objective 1 for more details).

** Name changed to protect identity*



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

Norms and behaviour change campaign

A report of an evaluation of the Freedom Fund's norms and behaviour change campaign targeting employers of CDWs was published in September 2023. A shorter brief is being translated into Amharic for distribution to relevant offices in Ethiopia. The campaign focused on two key themes: reducing CDWs' working hours and increasing their access to education. For more information on the report, see: <https://freedomfund.org/our-reports/behaviour-change-campaign-ethiopia/>

Mid-term evaluation

Population Council undertook an independent mid-term evaluation of the Freedom Fund's hotspot work in Ethiopia, with the following findings about the CDW hotspot:

Most effective interventions:

- community conversations and interface meetings
- female watch groups
- increasing policy-makers' in-depth understanding of issues around child domestic work
- door-to-door monitoring by government bodies and community members
- recruitment agents' follow-up of CDWs after placement.

Challenges experienced by partners:

- lack of acknowledgement/understanding among police and within the prosecution system of trafficking and labour law as it relates to CDWs
- high turnover of police and government officials reduces effectiveness of trainings.

Recommendations:

- work with more legal and political leaders to bring change in policies and systems
- increase program coverage to a higher proportion of the community, and intensify interventions with employers
- support awareness-raising and economic opportunities for families and children in rural areas to reduce push factors.

The Freedom Fund then arranged a workshop for partners to consider the recommendations, with workshop outcomes feeding into program planning for the coming two years.

VISION

Our vision is a world free of slavery.

MISSION

Our mission is to mobilise the knowledge, capital and will needed to end slavery.

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