



Ethiopia Hotspot
Annual Report 2021

Cover Frealem:

Frealem migrated to Lebanon for employment as a domestic worker where her employers withheld her resident card and salary. As a returning survivor, she was supported with housing, counselling, and skills training as part of the Bete project. Today she owns a growing poultry business. Photo credit: Genaye Eshatu / The Freedom Fund

Ethiopia Hotspot Annual Report 2021

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Contents

1. Operating context	3
2. Progress towards systems change	5
3. Hotspot outputs and outcomes	7
4. Emergency Response Fund and other initiatives	13
5. Case study	15
6. Independent evaluation and research	16
Annex 1: Internal report	17

Acronym key

AGAR:	AGAR Ethiopia Charitable Society
ANPPCAN:	African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect
BPDO:	Beza Posterity Development Organization
BCSG:	Bethany Christian Service Global, LLC
CIFA:	Centro Internazionale per L'infanzia e la Famiglia
CVM:	Comunita Volontari per il Mondo
CDW:	Child domestic worker
DWNU:	Domestic Workers National Union
EDA:	Emmanuel Development Association
EDF:	Ethiopian Federal Defence Forces
ECCSDCO:	Ethiopian Catholic Church Societies Development Council Organisation
HFJ:	Hope for Justice
IOM:	International Organisation for Migration
MCDP:	Mission for Community Development Program
MOLS:	Ministry of Labour and Skills
MOWCYA:	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
MOWSA:	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
OPRIFS:	Organization for Prevention, Rehabilitation & Integration of Female Street Children
PADet:	Professional Alliance for Development
PEMS:	Program to End Modern Slavery, US Department of State
TPLF:	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UNESCO:	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Operating context

1.1 Covid-19 and its impact on migration patterns

As with the rest of the world, Ethiopia continued in 2021 to be impacted by the covid-19 pandemic with the disruption of economic and livelihood activities and the implications for poverty reduction. 2021 has seen the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant across Ethiopia, and as a result, the second half of the year has seen an increase in cases. Availability of tests has remained patchy for most parts of the country, including in Addis Ababa. Vaccination rollout has remained minimal, with 2% of the population reported to have received two doses of the vaccine by the end of 2021. Ethiopia has now fallen behind many of its regional neighbours like Kenya, Sudan and Somalia regarding its vaccination effort.

The impact of covid has been felt differently across regions, between urban and rural settings and within socio-economic groups. One of the pandemic impacts has been on migration patterns within and outside Ethiopia. Many destination countries sent migrants back home after they were expelled from their place of employment due to financial challenges or efforts to contain the virus. Ethiopian migrant workers in the Middle East have particularly been affected with many returnees deported from places like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In July 2021, 48,000 migrants were expelled from Saudi Arabia, following an agreement with the government of Ethiopia. In early July, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported over 2,600 people returning a day.¹ As the Ethiopian government struggled to provide the necessary assistance, it resorted to aid for emergency assistance, with the IOM and other civil society actors involved in the necessary post-arrival assistance. Through the fourth round of the Emergency Response Fund, the Freedom Fund allocated US \$30,000 to our partner BPDO to support the government's emergency shelters struggling to respond to the dramatic

increase of migrants returning from Saudi Arabia every day because of forced deportations.

1.2 Escalation of the conflict in Tigray which led to a State of Emergency and the suspension of the hotspot in the Amhara region

It was the conflict in Tigray that most significantly marked the year 2021 in Ethiopia. The conflict erupted in November 2020 between the Ethiopian Federal Defence Forces (EDF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and escalated in 2021. It reached its most concerning level of insecurity and violence in November 2021. In mid-2021, the fighting spread beyond Tigray's borders, where it had been previously concentrated, as the TPLF captured strategic towns in the Amhara region. The TPLF appeared to be rapidly moving toward Addis Ababa, prompting international concerns and leading Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to announce a state of emergency on 2 November 2021.

The conflict left thousands of people dead, millions displaced and on the brink of famine. The situation created a humanitarian crisis in Tigray but also in the neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara. Our safer migration program in Amhara had been severely affected and in November 2021, our partners had to suspend all activities due to the escalation of the conflict.

1.3 Elections and a positive turn of events at the end of 2021

Despite a volatile and complex situation, Ethiopia peacefully concluded its election on 21 June 2021 which saw the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed re-elected.

Despite the instability, partners in Addis Ababa were able to pursue program activities for both safer migration and the child domestic worker programs without significant interruption.

¹ <https://ethiopia.iom.int/response-capacities-stretched-hasty-return-40000-ethiopian-migrants>

Following weeks of increased insecurity in the north and mounting instability in the rest of Ethiopia, Abiy significantly increased the military and battlefront effort in late 2021. Supported by countries like Turkey, the EDF made significant territorial gains by the end of December, forcing the TPLF to retreat into Tigray and call for dialogue. The government of Ethiopia responded by formally stating that they would stop their military advances into Tigray and pursue a national dialogue, opening an opportunity to advance peace talks in 2022.

1.4 Anti-trafficking and overseas employment proclamations updated

In the first half of 2021, Ethiopia revised proclamations 909 (Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants) and 923 (Overseas Employment Proclamation) to 1178 and 1246 respectively. From proclamation 923, 19 articles were revised. Among the changes, the Migration Task Force, which had coordinated migration management in Ethiopia, was renamed the National Partnership Coalition on Migration. It is led by the head of the Secretariat at the Ministry of Justice. The revised proclamation also proposes establishing a specific agency to coordinate migration management. Furthermore, the proclamation has removed the minimum educational requirement to migrate to the Middle East (which was previously grade 8). Instead requirements now include passing a National Competency Examination for potential migrants, after they have undertaken skills training. Returnees, who have previously been employed in a third country who wish to remigrate only need to sit the competency exam. This change is particularly influential for its potential to decrease irregular migration. According to a 2013 UNESCO study² only 50% of students in Ethiopia complete grade 8, leading many who did not fulfil this requirement to seek irregular migration routes.

1.5 Ministerial changes pertinent to trafficking and exploitation

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has split its mandate. The labour mandate of the ministry was transferred to the newly formed Ministry of Labour and Skills, while its social affairs mandate was given to the former Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA) which in turn has been renamed the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MOWSA). The previous mandate of MoWCYA will be maintained, with the change aiming to simplify the ministry's name only. The Office of the Attorney General was also changed and renamed the Ministry of Justice (which was its former name). This ministry will also maintain its original mandate with a few additional responsibilities that may not be relevant to the issue of trafficking.

A new proclamation that will define the ministries' roles has been drafted and is awaiting final approval by the Council of Ministers. Once approved and published, this will provide further clarity on the exact mandate of these government bodies, which will help refine how the Freedom Fund works with ministries, especially in relation to child domestic work.

² UNESCO/International Bureau of Education, 2010, *World Data on Education 2010/11*, www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Ethiopia.pdf

2. Progress towards systems change

2.1 Anti-trafficking and overseas employment proclamations updated

As mentioned in the previous section, Ethiopia revised proclamations 909 and 923 to 1178 and 1246 respectively. One significant change that partners had been advocating for was the removal of the minimum educational requirement to migrate to the Middle East (which was previously grade 8). This is a promising policy change that should remove the barriers to women applying for a visa for overseas employment through regular channels. Previously, many women who had not reached this level of education (including some women who had worked previously in the Middle East as domestic workers) did not qualify to apply for overseas employment as domestic workers. They were consequently forced to go through intermediaries and pay illegal recruitment fees to obtain forged paperwork.

Mechanisms for partners to review the implementation of the laws and opportunities to provide feedback and work with relevant government bodies through invited spaces like the National Partnership Coalition on Migration have been instrumental in promoting relevant policy changes. The Freedom Fund Ethiopia provided input to the working group that contributed to the revision of Proclamation 923, specifically regarding the challenges faced by potential migrants. Two of the working group members who worked on the proclamation revision were our partners AGAR and OPRIFS.

2.2 Modelling comprehensive reintegration services

The Freedom Fund and AGAR's reintegration model for returnees (Bete project) is a promising intervention that has already demonstrated positive outcomes to support the reintegration of women returnee migrants who experienced trauma and human trafficking. The long-term accompaniment of women is essential to sustainable economic, social and

psychological reintegration as well as to reduce the risk of re-trafficking.

Relevant government bodies with a mandate to support returnees need to have the capacity and resources at the decentralised level to support reintegration processes. By working closely with civil society organisations in delivering reintegration services, local government structures like the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (now renamed under the Ministry for Labour and Skills) can strengthen their capacity and deliver better on their mandate to support and reintegrate returnees. As the model is comprehensive, other stakeholders and actors in the migration space have shown an interest in learning more from the Bete project and adopting its modalities in their own interventions. Partners like AGAR have shared the Bete model as part of the National Partnership Coalition on Migration chaired by the Ministry of Justice and AGAR has worked with their local MOLS department at regional and woreda (district) levels to follow up on the reintegration process for returnees.

2.3 Supporting the empowerment of survivors

Through the reintegration work with returnees, the Freedom Fund and AGAR have supported survivor-led groups by building the skills of returnees, caring for their wellbeing and developing them in their role as leaders and agents of change. This is essential to sustaining the work of reintegration and to encouraging survivor leadership in the anti-trafficking sector.

Through previous Freedom Fund programming, a group of survivors had come together to share their experiences and raise awareness of human trafficking. In 2021, this group received support from the Freedom Fund/AGAR reintegration program to start their own organisation. KASMA (a local term for 'Foundation') has now become a locally registered organisation.

Working closely with survivors will improve the quality of reintegration work and the accompaniment provided to women returnees. The presence of such a survivor-led organisation in Ethiopia will reinforce the bottom-up approach to policy formulation and advocacy that the Freedom Fund and our partners have been supporting for years.

2.4 Establishing Community Watch Groups linking with government structures

Our partner PADet has used the model of the anti-trafficking task force to create Community Watch Groups to promote child rights and track child domestic worker (CDW) exploitation at the community level. These groups include volunteers - trained by PADet - from the community, along with representatives from woreda-level Women and Children's Affairs offices, Labour and Skills offices and police. Though these groups do not yet have the same authority as the anti-trafficking task forces, they have been able to get official acknowledgement from the sub-city, who have provided them with ID cards for their activities. These groups are key first responders in the identification, monitoring and referral of vulnerable children for services and support. There are currently 20 watch group members, who made 276 referrals of CDWs to the local authorities in 2021.

3. Hotspot outputs and outcomes

3.1 Progress towards hotspot objectives: child domestic workers program

This hotspot aims to improve the work and living conditions of CDWs and reduce domestic servitude of Ethiopian girls.

Objective 1: Building community understanding of child domestic work

Under the US funded Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS), community interventions have multiple layers, designed to target different influential groups in communities who have a direct relationship with and impact on CDWs. These include:

Community welfare responses to child domestic servitude

Community conversations are used to sensitise and empower communities on the need to be aware of and take action against the flourishing of domestic servitude, how to prevent abuse, and how to protect children and ensure their rights are respected. This is done through community conversations, stakeholder meetings and awareness-raising sessions. Additionally, employers are directly targeted with dedicated sessions where they can learn more in-depth about CDW rights and the employer's role in ensuring those rights are protected and respected. There are currently over 2,000 people participating in these groups, including 1,400 employers.

Advocating for change through community leaders and influencers

The program works with key leaders and influencers in communities such as representatives of different religious denominations, chair persons of Iddirs (local social security groups), representatives of different grassroots groups (women's groups, domestic workers' union), domestic work brokers and representatives of elders groups, all of whom have an important role to play in introducing and enforcing actions that improve CDW rights across their communities.

Building the referral system for at-risk children

Transport workers were trained on how to identify and refer a possible CDW victim of trafficking as well as the appropriate way to interview a CDW for referral services. 119 transport workers were trained by partners in 2021 and, so far, 30 children have been identified and referred to partners by transport workers who participated in the training.

Enabling safer recruitment and monitoring of CDWs

Training recruiters/brokers of CDWs on child rights conventions and the existing legal framework is another way of ensuring hiring standards for CDWs, such as access to education and limited working hours, are being maintained. Recruiters are also a touchpoint for partners to identify new CDWs in their operational areas. 423 recruiters have been trained so far through PEMS, with an average of 80% reporting (through the post-training survey) improved understanding of concepts, legal framework and prevention measures.

Improving standards of work and treatment for child domestic workers

Our partner OPRIFS has spearheaded the 'interface meeting' model to engage both employers and CDWs in constructive dialogue on their working conditions and treatment. Over a three-day convening period, employers and CDWs have the opportunity to attend separate sessions during which they identify and prioritise issues related to their role as an employer and as a domestic worker. The two groups are brought together on the last day of the convening period for a face-to-face conversation around common issues, in order to discuss the problems in a constructive manner. These exercises help both employers and CDWs deal with everyday communication problems and other routine work-related challenges, to share their own perspectives and improve their working relationships. So far 88

employers and 90 CDWs have attended. The model has been so successful that two other partners, PADet and BCSG, will be rolling out interface meetings in 2022.

Objective 2: Improving the functioning of the migration system in Ethiopia, such as supporting government responses, promoting fair and transparent recruitment practices, and strengthening law enforcement actions

Sharing learning to improve practices

Through partner interventions, the Freedom Fund is working to build better practices for a functioning migration system. For example, our partner ECCSDCO is implementing a **learning alliance forum** which includes representatives from MOWSA and the Ministry of Justice, the Domestic Workers Association and the Ethiopian Workers Confederation. As part of the forum, these representatives received training on the legal framework to protect CDWs and identified actions to be taken, including achieving clarity on their respective roles, the provision of awareness-raising sessions to communities and children, strengthening accountability of duty bearers, and strengthening support services to CDWs.

New methods for monitoring CDWs

As mentioned above (section 2.4), PADet has spearheaded the establishment of **Community Watch Groups** in their kebeles (municipal area). These groups include volunteers - trained by PADet - from the community, along with representatives from local government. The groups are key first responders in the identification, monitoring and referral of vulnerable children for services and support. They also have a role in mediating between employers and CDWs to improve conditions, resolve disagreements and communicate feedback from CDWs to partners on the types of services they want and need. PADet has also been working to strengthen the local government response by conducting an assessment of the MOWSA local offices, specifically of their capacity for case management and the strength of their child case documentation system. They are now supporting those offices to fill the gaps identified relating to the management of CDW cases.

Using the law to redress abuses of CDWs

Our partner OPRIFS has provided **legal aid support** to 18 cases of abuse since its program's inception. Two of these cases have led to convictions for child abuse, with a further 14 currently under investigation. While these cases are important exercises of the legal system and bring justice to abused children, none of the cases utilise the Ethiopian Anti-Trafficking proclamation (1178/2020) to convict. This is an important gap in the prosecution of traffickers that the Freedom Fund will seek to close in the coming year through technical assistance to upskill key offices that oversee investigations as well as specialised legal aid to partners to ensure cases are accompanied through the prosecution process.

Objective 3: Strengthening the capacity of civil society actors to influence and hold the government accountable

The Freedom Fund contracted a consultancy team to provide support in identifying the capacity gaps of key stakeholders mandated to deliver coordinated and quality services to CDWs, including prosecution of CDW trafficking cases. This consultancy also includes developing the knowledge, skills and capacities of our partners to deliver capacity development activities to stakeholders who support the provision of protection services to CDWs in Addis Ababa. An advocacy plan, which is to be finalised in 2022, will also support civil society actors to hold the government accountable for the delivery of those services aimed at reducing the risk of exploitation of CDWs and enforcing the rule of law.

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

Our partners OPRIFS and HFJ both operate **shelters** under the PEMS program and have received a combined total of 85 children since July 2021 when project activities started. Comprehensive aftercare support including psychosocial therapies and education are provided at the shelter, while the partners trace the families of the children.

Impact unpacked

As of the end of 2021, 56 children have been reintegrated with their families.

Family reunification and reintegration for former CDWs is a process which includes positive parenting techniques, small business skills training and in some cases seed grants to families. This capacity strengthening aims to reduce the child's likelihood of re-entering exploitative domestic work. Reintegrated children are monitored for a period of two years by the partner and the local authority to support the family.

Alternative Basic Education and **Life Skills Training** are another two key elements of all partners' CDW interventions under the PEMS program. These are provided either in tandem with or through local government schools, which share premises and resources for the benefit of the CDWs. 302 children received this type of education and training from our partners HFJ, OPRIFS, ECCSDCO and PADet in 2021. These courses are the foundation for CDWs to increase their self-esteem and ability to identify and reflect upon their experiences, as the time away from employers is a vital window for partner interventions. Education is also key to enabling the CDW to move away from exploitative domestic work into alternative industries as an adult.

3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives: safer migration program

Projects under our safer migration program aim to prevent the exploitation of prospective Ethiopian migrant domestic workers going to the Middle East and support returnees who have experienced, exploitation, trafficking and/or slavery in sustainable reintegration.

Objective 1: Building community understanding of safer migration

Community agency in safer migration dialogues

Community conversation and dialogue groups are a forum both for community members to

find general information about legal migration routes, proclamations and requirements, and have challenging discussions on how migration directly impacts their community. These are also a space for returnees to share their experiences and seek support as they manage the complex environment of return and reintegration. Our partners ANPPCAN, BPDO, CVM, EDA and PADet all include this method in their projects, seeing it as the most effective tool for actively engaging communities in safer migration. Partners train members of the community in facilitation skills as well as an understanding of the proclamations and systems related to migration and trafficking.

Impact unpacked

70 community conversation facilitators have been trained in 2021, each going on to lead a group. Over 2000 people have become members of a community conversation group in our program areas.

Community conversation facilitators usually host monthly discussions with their group on a variety of topics related to safer migration. During the state of emergency in Ethiopia (October-December 2021), they adapted their approach to use the mobile messaging platform Telegram to continue disseminating important information on safer migration throughout the crisis period. These groups are crucial during periods of instability and uncertainty, as many people are more likely to consider illegal migration routes to escape conflict and hardship.

Engaging high risk groups

Our partners ANPPCAN, EDA and MCDP also work through **school clubs** around the themes of media, drama and music. This work has a similar aim to the community conversations, but specifically to raise awareness amongst young people, particularly young women and girls who are most at risk of irregular migration due to a range of push factors including severe poverty, gender inequality, marginalisation and more recently instability and war in the region of Amhara. Teachers and students are trained in facilitating and managing the clubs, and their sessions are complemented by broader awareness-raising events hosted by partners in schools. Due to the conflict and school closures

in Amhara, only a few of these clubs were able to meet this year, reaching 1,200 students.

Our partner BPDO has introduced a new approach to their work in Amhara, using **one-to-one information sessions**. They found this approach to be very useful in facilitating detailed discussions, giving more time to diagnose complex situations and solve critical issues among those involved in the discussions. Topics covered include regular and irregular migration, safer and unsafe migration, current migration scenarios, recruitment agencies and related issues. 50 women have received one-to-one sessions, 13 of whom were survivors of trafficking.

Objective 2: Improving the functioning of the migration system in Ethiopia, such as supporting government responses, promoting fair and transparent recruitment practices, and strengthening law enforcement actions

Improving migrant experience with private overseas employment agencies

There are approximately 600 registered and an estimated 8,000 unregistered private employment agencies/recruiters operating in Ethiopia. Registered agencies are only loosely monitored (see further information on this below) and are often not provided with guidance from authorities on legal migration processes and regulations. As such, our partners CVM, EDA and Hiwot Ethiopia engaged directly with these agencies to improve practices, including providing training on the current legal framework (such as proclamations 1246/2021 and 1178/2020) and awareness-raising on the rights of migrant workers, the risks of irregular migration and steps that can be taken toward the safeguarding of migrants. 121 private employment agency/recruitment agents have been trained so far. Additionally, Hiwot has set up roundtable discussions between recruiters and survivors on respective challenges as well as the benefits of creating a conducive working environment for safer migration. This fosters a greater understanding of the harsh realities migrants face in destination countries, and the need for better oversight on the part of these agencies to ensure their safety.

Impact unpacked

Our partner CVM collaborated with the Office of Labour, Enterprise, Industry and Development to create an Operations Assessment Checklist for recruitment agencies. Using the checklist they have been able to investigate 40 recruiters in 2021, leading to two having their licences revoked for malpractice.

The Office of Labour, Enterprise, Industry and Development is a new body under the Ministry of Labour and Skills, which has a crucial institutional role to play in stamping out exploitation and trafficking in the overseas employment sector. For example, the Freedom Fund's most recent survey of returnee domestic workers found that only 38% had a formal contract, something that a recruitment agency should ensure prior to migration. Improving the bureau's ability to monitor and sanction recruiters forces recruiters to improve practices that directly impact the quality of migrant workers' experience. Having proper documentation for work is just one aspect that can protect a migrant worker from abuse and exploitation in the destination country.

Strengthening the **Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants** (now the National Partnersip Coalition) task forces is an important component in improving the migration system in Ethiopia. These task forces combine representatives from the police, Labour and Skills, and Women and Social Affairs offices, as well as partner organisations. Our partners, BPDO, EDA and PADet contribute their expertise to workshops aimed at increasing knowledge of Proclamation 1178, improving understanding of the strengths and gaps in task force operations and agreeing members' roles and responsibilities. They also utilise the task forces to reach different stakeholders, including courts of justice, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Skills, and the education office. They raise current challenges, such as providing quality legal support and referral services to intercepted migrants, and explain how the support of these stakeholders can alleviate challenges. Eight task forces have been strengthened by partners in this way since project inception.

Most partners under the program have conducted training to support government responses. This is primarily done through engaging with the specific local ministry offices and police, as well as the judiciary and occasionally federal ministries. These trainings aim to improve stakeholders' knowledge of the specific issues migrants face, the trends in their regions, the laws and policies that are in place, the safeguarding of migrants and what their role is in enforcing that system. These workshops also act as opportunities for collaboration between partners and the various departments, with the reports on attendance being a strong indicator of how much the sessions are valued. 122 people including 42 judges and 43 police officers have been trained in 2021. Unfortunately, due to the conflict, most trainings of officials and police had to be suspended in the last quarter of 2021.

Objective 3: Strengthening the capacity of civil society actors to influence and hold the government accountable

Frontline leaders ensure safer migration

Our partners including BPDO, CVM, EDA and PADet **work with civil society actors** like religious and Iddir leaders, as well as community-based organisations like the Women's Development Army, to prevent human trafficking and irregular migration in these communities. This comes in the form of training and sensitisation on key laws and policies related to migration as well as collaboration with local authorities and law enforcement to report suspected victims of trafficking. These leaders are often key influencers in the communities and therefore act as reinforcers of the messages relayed in community conversations and school sessions on safer migration resources. Over 200 members of local civil society groups have been strengthened in this way since the start of the program, while their collaborations with the sub-city offices of Addis Ababa have led to a commitment from government representatives to create a consultation group comprised of civil society organisations and recruitment agency actors to follow up on cases of irregular migration and overall recruitment processes.

Collective organising to improve domestic workers' rights

Our partner CVM has recently established a **Domestic Workers' Associations database system** for the Domestic Workers National Union (DWNU). This secure cloud database can track and trace domestic workers within and outside the country, with the long-term aim to ensure support is deployed more efficiently. The database can also provide domestic workers abroad, as well as returnees migrants, with a network when they are away from home and when they return. By the end of 2021, CVM had transferred 2,000 entries from their old system, with a further 3,000 to be transferred.

In the process of establishing the database, CVM has worked closely with the DWNU, providing training on the current legal framework for migration and the mechanisms in place for safer migration. This group's long-term goal is to ensure the ratification of ILO Convention 189, which recognises domestic work in the formal economy. To have this debated in parliament they need 10,000 signatories for their petition, for which they currently have 3,000. Consequently, participants from the training have designed an awareness-raising plan to reach up to 7,000 of their union members to sign up to the database and at the same time circulate their petition. The DWNU has also committed to conducting further outreach sessions to non-members to raise awareness about the database to up to 20,000 migrants.

Objective 4: Improving access to and quality of reintegration services for returnees

Essential services for survivors

Shelter services are currently provided by our partners AGAR and BPDO in Addis Ababa. Under the PEMS program, they provide rehabilitation and reintegration support and assistance for vulnerable returnees. Agar has developed a strong Standard Operating Procedure for identification, assessment, referral for specialist services, psychiatric and psychosocial support, skills training and reintegration. BPDO, which has only recently set up its shelter in Addis Ababa, has been engaged in an intensive learning exchange

with AGAR to find the best model and unique aspects that can be replicated in its own shelter support. Since the project's inception, partners have received 467 women and some children to their shelter facilities.

Reunification and reintegration are equally important complements to shelter services. Reintegration of returnees takes place after returnees are provided with all the necessary services and have made sufficient progress in their rehabilitation. The tracing of the returnee's family starts as soon as they are stable and give their consent on the involvement of their families in family counselling. Family visits and counselling sessions are highly encouraged from the beginning of rehabilitation, so as to involve families in the process and ensure positive support after reunification. So far 140 women have been reintegrated. The medium term impact of reintegration will start in 2022 as this will have been at least six months since some returnees have been reintegrated. Due to the ongoing conflict situation, family tracing and reunification has been significantly hampered as many returnees are from regions with internally displaced populations or, in the case of Tigray, are completely cut off from communication. As these regions become more stable, the hope is that more returnees will be able to be reintegrated in the coming year.

Rebuilding lives after exploitation

Vocational and life skills training includes life skills like literacy and numeracy, small business entrepreneurship, animal husbandry, garment manufacturing and food preparation, amongst others. In addition to shelter, our partners CIFA, PADet, Hiwot, EDA and CVM work through official Vocational Training Centres with returnees and potential migrants to improve their competencies and employment options. These classes are also a sensitisation opportunity to discuss safer migration, communication, decision making and related topics to improve participants' lives. 331 women have received vocational training through the program in 2021.

Under the Bete repatriation project focusing on Ethiopian domestic workers stranded in Lebanon, our partner AGAR received 304 women at its shelter in 2021. 196 were women

with long-term needs who had to stay at the shelter for an extended period of time, compared to 108 women who were reunited with their families a few days after arriving in Addis Ababa. Those women who were reintegrated into their communities were also provided with ongoing accompaniment including counselling and family support. 141 women completed vocational training through the Bete project in 2021, with 127 starting their own businesses and earning a new income. The other 14 women gained employment through the formal labour market. The Freedom Fund plans to conduct an evaluation of the Bete project in 2022 to better understand the long-term outcomes of reintegration, months after women have been supported through the project.

4. Emergency Response Fund and other initiatives

4.1 Providing support to Ethiopian returnees deported from Saudi Arabia through the Emergency Response Fund

As mentioned earlier in this report (section 1.1), the number of Ethiopian migrant workers who have been deported from the Saudi Arabia increased at a worrying rate throughout 2021. A large number of migrant workers - over 48,000 according to the government report - arrived at the Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa from Saudi Arabia in the month of July alone. The Government of Ethiopia struggled to respond to the increased needs of deportees and request support. Through the Freedom Fund's Emergency Response Fund, our partner BPDO and the Freedom Fund supported 300 of the most vulnerable returnees coming through the government shelters. BPDO and the Freedom Fund worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, to lead the implementation of the project activities, including setting beneficiaries' selection criteria based on vulnerability. Twenty returnees received comprehensive longer-term shelter services at the BPDO shelter, while others were reunified with their families following support with basic food and non-food items.

4.2 Pilot set-up phase for the launch of the Thrive project

After delays due to Covid-19 in 2020, the Freedom Fund continued the set-up phase of the Thrive pilot project in 2021. Once launched, the Thrive pilot will assist survivors returning to Ethiopia from the Middle East in finding sustainable employment within the formal sector in Addis Ababa. Efforts in 2021 were focused on finalising project components and developing a proposal to Minderoo Foundation.

To inform project design, we consulted relevant stakeholders to gauge their interest and refine the pilot's approaches. Workshops with potential

employers highlighted their interest in the project and we were especially encouraged by their positive response to Thrive's approach to implementing a "day release program" whereby employers allow employees to have a day off every month for personal and professional development.

Additional insight was gathered during survivor consultations. Working with Survivor Alliance, the Freedom Fund hosted a focus group discussion with returnee survivors to gain their insight into the Thrive pilot design. The main findings from this discussion were that: (1) there is a high level of support for the project concept; (2) comprehensive support services should be incorporated such as mental health services and training for building project participant confidence; (3) survivor involvement should be incorporated through all stages of the project; and (4) assurance should be made that survivor feedback mechanisms address issues, not just collect data.

Survivor Alliance also provided leadership training to the focus group discussion participants and noted it appeared that the opinions of survivors had not been requested in this type of format before. Reflecting on this, the Freedom Fund opted to incorporate survivor leadership training within the Thrive project implementation. We have also now included the engagement of survivor leaders to assist in supporting Thrive project participants. This will allow for aspects of the project to not only be survivor-informed, but survivor-led and driven.

Given the growing challenges with insecurity in Ethiopia, at year end it was determined that a security and market assessment should be conducted to review the current context and determine pilot feasibility. This assessment will be completed in Q1 2022 and pending results, pilot commencement is now scheduled for Q2 2022.

4.3 Supporting partners' Community of Practice

The joint Community of Practice (CoP) was launched at the beginning of the PEMS project in June 2021 with the aim of building consensus and sharing approaches between partners to bring consistency to the work under the safer migration and CDW programs. The Freedom Fund prepared guidelines for the CoP, which explain frequency of meetings, agenda setting and how follow-up is conducted.

Following the guidelines, a number of CoP meetings took place in 2021. Under the **CDW program**, the Freedom Fund facilitated six meetings in 2021 in Addis Ababa. These covered a number of topics ranging from respective approaches used by partners to identify and monitor CDWs, best practices on children's shelter and service provision, sharing of monitoring tools and inputs to the norms and behaviour change campaign. The CoPs also included refresher training on compliance requirements including the Leahy clause and donor reporting.

Under the **safer migration program**, two separate CoP groups brought together the partners in Addis Ababa and in Amhara. The Freedom Fund was able to facilitate five CoP meetings for Addis Ababa partners. The agenda included topics ranging from shelter and referral services to issues related to beneficiaries' double-counting, training materials and compliance requirements. Partners in Amhara were only able to meet twice over the summer and discussions focused on their joint collaboration for system change, sharing program monitoring tools and compliance requirements.

A final CoP meeting was organised between all partners to reflect on the 2021 CoP platform and agree on a new plan for 2022 focused on building knowledge, solving problems and nurturing a stronger network.

5. Case study

Wede, aged 28, migrated to the Middle East to work as a domestic worker in 2017. Her life in Ethiopia had not been easy following the death of her parents when she was nine years old. Wede initially lived with her aunt, who treated her like a maid, refused to send her to school and eventually threw her out of the house. Wede found work washing clothes and accommodation in a rented house with some friends, but she struggled to afford her living costs and was unable to save money for the business she dreamed of starting. A cousin then suggested she migrate to the Middle East for work and, after considering her options, Wede decided it was the only way she could hope to improve her income and circumstances. She found a broker to facilitate the migration process, including travel and job placement as a domestic worker.

Once in Lebanon, Wede's employers refused to pay her the salary communicated by the broker, and due to the language barrier, she was unable to negotiate for the full amount. Wede also had no residency permit and didn't know anyone, leaving her very isolated, so she accepted the reduced salary. Her employers sometimes withheld her salary altogether, and on occasion refused her food, sanitary materials and personal protective equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of this maltreatment, Wede was extremely unhappy, lost a lot of weight and became unwell. She eventually escaped her employer's house and registered at the Ethiopian Embassy in Lebanon. After months at the embassy shelter, Wede was selected to return to Ethiopia via the Bete project in December 2020.

After an initial assessment as a high vulnerability returnee, Wede stayed at our partner Agar's shelter in Addis Ababa for several months. She initially fell into a depression and felt frustrated by the lack of opportunity in her home country. Gradually, as she received counselling and medical support, Wede started to process her anger and recover from her depression. After completing training in vocational and business skills, she received start-up capital from Agar to open a small restaurant where she serves fast food, soft drinks, coffee and tea. Wede's business is thriving, and she has been able to employ another woman to assist her.

“[Bete] changed my life and restored my life, gave me hope and helped me be successful. I didn't think my life would go on such an incredible journey. However, through your support I became a woman who has a story to be heard and successful experience to be heard and to change others' lives.”

6. Independent evaluation and research

6.1 Scoping study on child domestic servitude in Addis Ababa

As part of the PEMS program, a report of key findings from the scoping study titled *Reducing the prevalence of child domestic servitude in Addis Ababa* was finalised in the first quarter of 2021.

The scoping study carried out by the Population Council and the Freedom Fund was conducted in the second half of 2020 and was used to inform the design of the baseline study for the child domestic worker program in Addis Ababa. The scoping study has also informed the engagement of local organisations to help improve outcomes for CDWs. Findings helped to identify 'hotspot' areas of Addis Ababa for child domestic work, and to characterise the situation of CDWs including the nature and extent of abuse and exploitation, opportunities for protection and any benefits of engaging in this form of work.

The study included 35 interviews with informants who have direct knowledge of child domestic work and child trafficking in urban Ethiopia, including representatives from government offices, multilateral and United Nations agencies, as well as local and international non-governmental organisations.

The report has been disseminated through the Freedom Fund website (<https://freedomfund.org/our-reports/reducing-the-prevalence-of-child-domestic-servitude-in-addis-ababa-ethiopia/>), shared as part of the Freedom Fund's research bulletin (sent to a mailing list of around 1,800 people), and promoted on the Freedom Fund's social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and via staff networks including with members of staff at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia. The report is also featured on the Population Council's website.

6.2 Scoping study in the Gulf countries

While the Freedom Fund primarily focuses on the prevention of unsafe migration in the country of origin (Ethiopia), it is essential that we work with migrant communities in destination countries where exploitation and trafficking take place. While pre-departure training, information sharing and skills building of potential Ethiopian migrant workers is important to support vulnerable communities to make informed choices about their migration journey, this doesn't take away the risk of exploitation and abuse in destination countries. This is partly due to the Kafala system in Middle East and Gulf countries that defines the relationship between foreign workers and their local sponsor. This system tends to give excessive control of the worker's migration status to the employer and is therefore open to abuse.

Traditionally, Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East and Gulf have been poorly informed and organised. The Freedom Fund is keen to identify opportunities to support formal and/or informal groups of domestic workers specifically to reduce the risk of vulnerability and exploitation of Ethiopian migrant workers in destination countries. In 2021, the Freedom Fund contracted **en.v** in Kuwait to conduct a scoping study of potential partners representing the voices of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon, Kuwait and Bahrain.

Annex 1: Internal report

Recruitment for the Freedom Fund Ethiopia office

The increased numbers of partners and the formalisation of operational partnerships with the Government of Ethiopia in 2021 meant that the Freedom Fund had to increase in-country support. A new finance manager was recruited. A driver and logistical assistant position was also recruited following the purchase of a car. A maternity cover was hired for the UK-based project manager role, primarily to support the management of the PEMS award.

Submission of operational agreement to the Government of Ethiopia

Given the Freedom Fund's growing portfolio of work in Ethiopia, Freedom Fund Ethiopia pursued an operational agreement with the Government of Ethiopia. This provided an overview of the portfolio over the next three years and aimed at securing government buy-in for the Freedom Fund's work in the years to come. The agreement will also help promote collaboration and ensure an amenable operating context for the Freedom Fund in Ethiopia.

Procurement of Safeguarding technical assistance

In 2021, the Freedom Fund procured technical support on safeguarding for all PEMS partners. This consultancy, which started in January 2022, aims to strengthen partners' safeguarding processes and partners' community feedback and reporting mechanisms.



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