

Exploitative working conditions for child domestic workers in Ethiopia

Main findings from a large scale study on the prevalence of child domestic workers in Addis Ababa

Domestic work is considered a 'personal service' and therefore not covered under the current Ethiopian Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019



37% of the girls in the study sites were engaged as domestic workers

What is set out under the proclamation:



Young workers (aged 15 to 17) are prohibited from working more than **42 hours per week**

Young workers are prohibited from **working before 6:00 AM or after 10:00 PM**



Young workers are required to have at least **one rest day per week**

Young workers are prohibited from **working on public holidays**

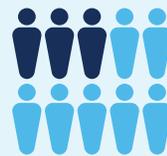


Experiences of child domestic workers:

On average, those surveyed worked **55** hours per week



31% typically worked before 6:00 AM or after 10:00 PM



40% worked every day with no rest day during the week



27% worked on public holidays



In Ethiopia, domestic work is one of the most common forms of work among girls and young women.

Among all girls aged 12 to 17 who lived in the study area, 37 percent of them were effectively working as child domestic workers (CDWs). Child domestic work is not always exploitative or harmful to the child. Indeed, some domestic work such as helping the family in the home or earning pocket money outside school hours can contribute to a young person's positive and healthy development, if they are legally protected from exploitation.

In 2019, the Ethiopian government enacted Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 that includes legal parameters to prevent the exploitation of children engaged in work. Under this Labour Proclamation, children under the age of 15 are prohibited from working. For 'young workers' aged 15 to 17, the Labour Proclamation prohibits working over a maximum of seven hours per day, working before 6:00 AM or after 10:00 PM, working on public holidays and requires at least one rest day per week.¹

Child domestic workers are not protected by the same legal parameters as other child workers in Ethiopia.² Domestic work is not governed by the Labour Proclamation and is not recognised as a protected form of labour in the formal sector. In addition, the Ethiopian government has yet to ratify the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2011 Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 which includes minimum labour standards for domestic workers.

Based on a large-scale survey³, child domestic workers reported exploitative work conditions, all in contravention to the legal parameters under the Labour Proclamation. Based on the provisions of the Labour Proclamation, all girls aged 12 to 14 were considered to be working illegally, while 87 percent of those aged 15 to 17 were in illegal child labour. This assessment is largely due to excessive working hours and being given no rest days. On average, girls reported working 55 hours per week and 25 percent of girls reported working over 70 hours per week.

Child domestic workers are children first. Excessive working hours must be reduced and allow adequate time for rest, play and learning. Clear legal parameters for domestic workers and their employers must be legitimated by recognising domestic work as a protected form of labour under Ethiopian labour laws. We call on government officials, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the recommendations of this study to protect CDWs from exploitation in Ethiopia.

¹ Federal Negarit Gazette of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), 2019, "Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019," Addis Ababa: FDRE, September.

² CDWs include girls who self-identify as domestic workers as well as girls who report a minimum of 14 hours of domestic work undertaken per week and not living with conjugal family members.

³ This study is based on a probabilistic sample of 3,171 girls aged 12 to 18, who were working as domestic workers.

Recommendations

- Recognise domestic work under official labour laws, as well as through the ratification and incorporation of ILO Resolution Convention 189.
- Utilise existing local leaders and community structures, such as Idirs, faith leaders and kebele and woreda-level structures, to instigate change in harmful norms towards child domestic workers, through strategies such as Codes of Conduct for employers and model contracts.
- Break the isolation of child domestic workers with safe spaces aimed at: building their confidence, skills and social capital; raising awareness of current laws and policies; and connecting them with support services and entitlements.
- Implement special provisions for child-friendly reporting, investigation and tribunal procedures in suspected cases of abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

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Read the full report at <https://freedomfund.org/eth-cdw2022/>

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