

Final Evaluation of the ChildSpace Project (2018-2022)

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By

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Acronyms

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| AA | Addis Ababa |
| CoC | Centre of Concern |
| FBOs | Faith based Organizations |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GBV | Gender Based Violence |
| DIRC | Drop in and Rehabilitation Centre |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome |
| MCMDO | Mother and Children Multisectoral Organization |
| MEAL | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning |
| MoWSA | Ministry of Women and Social Affairs |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD/DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee |
| STI | Sexually Transmitted Infection |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |

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Executive summary

GOAL Ethiopia has been implementing a child space project in collaboration with Mothers and Children Multisectoral Organization (MCMDO) and the Center of Concern (CoC) in the cities of Addis Ababa and Hawassa over the past 10 years to reduce the vulnerability of children and youth living on the streets. The project's goal was to contribute to the reduction of children and youth vulnerabilities, and the project's main objective was to improve the welfare of these groups.

This evaluation of the project was initiated with the general objective of ascertaining the results of the project and assessing the coverage, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of the project and capturing project challenges and best practices to inform future programming.

To accomplish this purpose, qualitative method of data collection that included key informants interview, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, and documents reviews were used to gather information from primary and secondary sources. The required information was collected from government stakeholders, project participants, and the project team. The evaluation took place between October 18 and 30 November 2023.

A total of 20 key informants (100% of the target), of whom 4 (20% were females), were interviewed from different institutions. A total of 28 street-connected children, youth, and caregivers (100% target) were interviewed in Addis Ababa and Hawassa to address the objective of the evaluation of which 50% were females. Ten FGDs (100% of the target) were conducted in both Addis Ababa and Hawassa, where drop-in centers were operational. Five FGDs were conducted with children, youth and exit committees in each city. A total of 75 individuals (45% female) participated in the focus group discussions. Three case stories of project participants are documented and incorporated into the report.

Discussions with evaluation participants confirmed that the project interventions, results and objectives were and remain relevant to the needs and priorities of the project participants and the development plans of local authorities, despite changes in context. The various interventions and results of the projects aligned with the general objective of improving the well-being of street-connected children and youth and reducing their vulnerability to different abuses in Addis Ababa and Hawassa.

The planned results and objectives of the project were achieved in most cases. Data obtained from project record indicated that 18,184 (117% of the target) street children and youth benefited from integrated services in the Drop in Rehabilitation Centers (DIRCs). Children and youth interviewed by the evaluation team reported that their well-being had improved as a result of the integrated services provided by the DIRCs and the measures taken by the project (training in vocational and entrepreneurial skills) to improve their access to alternative sources of income. As reported by key informants from government stakeholders and the project team, the children who were reunited with their families stayed off the streets, which improved their well-being. The young people who successfully completed the rehabilitation phase and were supported by the project in creating an alternative livelihood were also able to testify to the positive changes in their lives.

592 young people and/or caregivers (76% of the target) were trained in various vocational training courses by the support of ChildSpace project. The youth who took part in the in-depth interviews reported that their income and their livelihood situation has been improved. Similarly, 1231 (120% of the target) youth/ caregivers were trained in business skills and engaged in one or more businesses of their choice. Youth who were trained in business skills and who were participated in the in-depth interviews reported that their income have increased as the result of the project's intervention. Likewise, 1979 (84% of the target), street youth and children received health check and medical services through referral and at DIRCs with the support of the project. 6614(78% of the target) youth were trained in reproductive health. Youth who participated in the in-depth interviews and FGDs in Addis Ababa and Hawassa unanimously reported that healthy life style was increasingly practiced by them and their peers. As witnessed by children and youth who participated in the FGDs and in-depth interviews across the project sites, the training of life skills

helped them to cope with the harsh street life and helped most of them to decide to move to the next phase of interventions- reunification to families and/ or integration to the community. To this end, 1087 (90% of the target) were reunified after family tracing and properly guiding the children to decide under the overall guidance of respecting the best interest of the child with the support of ChildSpace project.

In terms of coverage and coherence, interviews conducted with the project team and the review of the project document showed that the project was inclusive and open to all children and youth connected to the street with some restrictions in terms of age. To this end, street-connected children aged 7-18 and caregivers / women whose age does not exceed 24 were eligible to be registered and access existing services.

The overall budget utilization of the project for the project period was 100.3%, which indicated that the allocated budget was used effectively to provide planned services to the project participants. Taking into account the total number of street-connected children and youth reached by the project, the evaluation team has an opinion that a minimum cost was used to rehabilitate and support a street-connected child/ youth.

Most of the key informants and project participants interviewed are optimistic about the sustainability of the project's net benefits. To this end, the necessary measures were taken to ensure the sustainability of the net benefits of exit phase interventions. The reunified children were provided with livelihood support. They were linked to relevant Woreda government offices including the Women and Children Office and schools, for continued support. The vocational skill training was provided in cooperation with the private sectors and was followed by job placement and training arrangements on-the-job that ensured the effectiveness of the intervention and its sustainability. On the other hand, the evaluation team found few gaps that may negatively impact the sustainability of the project. The participation of the community and government in the management and operation of the centers was minimal. Moreover, project participants who were supported in business skills to run their own business were challenged due to lack of working space and less cooperation from trade and market offices. Based on the findings discussed in this report, few recommendations are provided for future programming.

- Enhance community and community-based organizations' participation in the design and implementation of the next phase of the project.
- Enhance the advocacy and lobby efforts of the project so that increased support of government is secured for street children and youth connected to the street.
- Strengthen the referral system that was started with few NGOs and health institutions to include a higher number of NGOs, government offices, FBOs, Iddir associations, and interested groups to increase the long-term impact and sustainability of interventions in this area.
- Strengthened individualized attention and tailor-made services for street children and youth connected to the street.
- Develop minimum service quality standards so that it is possible to ensure service quality at the drop-in centers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Structure of the report

The report is divided into four sections. The first section contains an introduction that briefly explains the project proposal and the mission objectives. The second chapter addresses the methodology used for the evaluation. The third chapter of the report is devoted to the presentation of the data, the analysis, and the discussion of the results. The fourth chapter deals with the conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations for future programming.

1.2 Project Background

GOAL Ethiopia has been implementing a child space project in the cities of Addis Ababa and Hawassa over the past 10 years to reduce the vulnerability of children and youth living on the streets (street-connected children and youth). The project has been implemented since 2012 in collaboration with two local NGOs called Mother and Children Multisectoral Organization (MCMDO) and the Center of Concern (CoC). The project's goal was to contribute to the reduction of children and youth vulnerabilities and the project's main objective was to improve the welfare of these groups. The project had four outcomes that include:

- 1) *Improved self-protection skills of children and youth against GBV, harm, and exploitation*
- 2) *Improved livelihoods of street youth and parents/caregivers to meet their development needs*
- 3) *Enhanced life skills of children and youth through the provision of services.*
- 4) *Enhanced health lifestyle of children and youth connected to the street.*

The theory of change that the project pursued during its life time stated that *'IF integrated rehabilitation services such as primary health, hygiene and sanitation, recreational, life skills training, vocational, numeracy and literacy skills, business and vocational skill trainings are*

provided for children and youth living on the streets and IF family tracing, reunification, and parenting skill sessions and awareness creation sessions for the families of children, local institutions, and community members occur, then the vulnerability of street living children & youths will be mitigated and their health and well-being improved. “

The child space project’s interventions involved the provision of safe spaces, through centers and street work, where children and youth benefited from life-changing protection services such as daily sanitation, training in life and business skills, recreational activities, sexual health and much needed psychosocial support. The project has also rebuilt the resilience of children and youth, offering job training, small business initiatives and income generation activities, a chance to trace and reunite families and participate in advocacy efforts, networking and collaboration with stakeholders to improve the lives of destitute street children and youth connected to the street.

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The general objective of the evaluation as indicated in the TOR was to determine the project results and evaluate the coverage, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of the project and capture project challenges and best practices to inform future programming. Specifically the evaluation aims to:

- Evaluate the degree to which the project ensured the welfare of street children and youth connected to the street.
- Identify how the project ensured the livelihood and healthy lifestyle of street children and youth connected to the street.
- Evaluate to what extent GOAL and its partners delivered effective, efficient, relevant and timely activities to street children and youth, as set in the project proposal.
- Identify key lessons learned, challenges, and provide recommendations for future programming of the ChildSpace project in Addis Ababa and Hawassa.

This evaluation covers the results achieved by the project in the last five years from 2018 to 2022. The evaluation assessed the performance of the project activities and the results achieved during the project implementation period in the target groups. To this end, data collection for the evaluation was conducted from both operational areas (Addis Ababa and Hawassa). The evaluation attempted to address all evaluation questions and deliverables indicated in the TOR and discussed in the methodology section of this report.

2. Description of the evaluation and Methodology

2.1 Description of the evaluation process

After signing the service contract between GOAL Ethiopia and Nafrobi Strategy and Project Management Consult PLC, the inception report was prepared and submitted to GOAL Ethiopia for review and approval. The inception report was reviewed by the technical team of GOAL Ethiopia and the implementing partners and was finally approved by GOAL Ethiopia on October 18, 2023. The evaluation was conducted between October 18 and November 30, 2023.

A team of consultants with experience in various subject areas and qualifications was deployed to both project areas to collect data. They were also used to conduct interviews with key informants and FGDs at the field level. Field-level data collection was carried out from October 18, 2023 to October 28, 2023. Transcribing, data analysis, and reporting occurred between October 30 and November 30, 2023.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of the evaluation, a qualitative method approach was used to collect the necessary data from primary and secondary sources. Accordingly, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, case studies, and a review of secondary documents were used to collect the qualitative data for the evaluation. To this end, the information sources were the project participants (street-connected children and youth, caregivers or parents who were previously benefited from the ChildSpace project (both sites) and few respondents currently being served (Hawassa site), government stakeholders, and project team. This method of data collection was preferred when predefined outcome indicators have been established at the beginning of the project that do not require numerical data.

In addition, the evaluation team looked into project proposals and reports to gather more details regarding planned activities and their level of completion for the secondary data. Additionally,

pertinent evaluation records were reviewed. A contextual OECD/DAC criterion was used as an overarching evaluation framework.

2.2.1 Key Informants Interview

Key informants are those who know the project very well to evaluate it. They were identified from various institutions in consultation with the project team. The key informants were drawn from relevant government offices such as finance and economy, women and social affairs, health offices (health centers and hospitals), and police offices with which GOAL Ethiopia and its implementing partners have implemented the ChildSpace project. Furthermore, key informants were drawn from the project team (implementing partners) and like-minded organizations. Key informants were selected using a nonprobability sampling and interviewed individually on the relevance, overall performance, impacts, lessons learnt, recommendations for future planning, and implementation challenges. A total of 20 key informants (100% of the target), of whom 20% were female, were interviewed from the different institutions. These informants were interviewed on a number of topics that included the project's relevance, coverage/coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability among others.

2.2.2 In-depth Interview:

A total of 28 street- connected children, youth and their parents/ caregivers (100% target) were interviewed to address the objective of the assignment. 14 children, youth, and parents / caregivers per project site were interviewed. 12 youth (6 boys and 6 girls) served by the project and benefited from different interventions (vocational training, reproductive health, and integrated into the community) participated in the in-depth interviews that were conducted in Addis Ababa and Hawassa. In the same way, a total of 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls) who received different services including health check, treatment and life skills were interviewed on the scale, effectiveness, and impact of the project on their lives. Eight parents or caregivers or youth (4 females) were interviewed in the project areas. The following table summarizes the number of participants per project site as follows:

Table 1: Number of participants of in-depth interview

| s/n | Project site | Youth | | | | Caregivers | | | | Children | | | | Total | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----|
| | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | | | |
| | | P ¹ | A ² | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | |
| 1 | Addis Ababa | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 14 |
| 2 | Hawassa | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 14 |
| | Total | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 28 | 28 | |

Source: field note, 2023

2.2.3 Focus groups Discussions

10 FGDs (100%) were conducted in both Addis Ababa and Hawassa, where drop-in centers were operational in the cities for over 10 years. 5 FGDs were conducted with children, youth, and exit committees in each city. A total of 75 individuals (45 % females) participated in the focus group discussions. 7-10 people attended one focus group discussion. The discussions were held on topics such as project design, implementation, relevance, effectiveness, benefits and sustainability of the net benefits of the project. Men's and women's FGDs were held with the project participants (youth and children). Nonetheless, a mixed FGD with the exit committees was conducted. In a similar vein, for the discussions, project participants between the ages of 12 and 14 formed one cohort group and those between the ages of 15 and 24 formed another. The discussions were led by experienced consultants. Participants in the discussions were identified in collaboration with the project team on the ground in the selected project areas.

¹¹ P= plan

² A= Accomplishment

2.2.4 Case study

The consulting team conducted critical field observations by visiting who once a street connected youth / caregivers who benefited from the project intervention to document success stories of the project. Three case studies (100%) were conducted, analyzed, documented, and included in the report. In addition, we reviewed and included a success story prepared by the project team.

2.3 Data analysis

Qualitatively collected data was organized and categorized into the main research question of the study, and thematic analysis was used for analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes. To this end, the first step of qualitative data analysis was verbal transcription of the interviews, followed by development of relevant themes according to the preliminary outline of the report. Then, the interpretation was completed to integrate the views of the various groups on specific discussion points. The interpreted qualitative data and the described quantitative data which were obtained from the project records, were integrated in the analysis phase so that the presentation of the data was verified by the facts obtained from both sources.

2.4 Quality assurance

To maintain data quality, the consulting team took the following measures:

- Key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and FGDs were moderated by senior consultants. Summaries of key information and FGD participant responses were presented to participants at the end of the interview session to ensure that their responses/voices were captured as told by the participants.
- Finally, data collected from various sources was triangulated and only validated data formed the basis for the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report.

2.5 Limitation of the Evaluation

- For this evaluation, some of the project participants—children who were reunified outside of Addis Ababa and Hawassa—were not consulted. Nonetheless, pertinent monitoring data and secondary sources regarding the reunification process were employed in this assessment.
- A small sample size was selected from the overall number of project participants due to the qualitative nature of the evaluation approach, making it impossible to extrapolate the findings to all project participants.

3. Data presentation, Results and Discussions

3.1 Results and Discussions

3.1.1 Context Changes

Since 2018, when this phase of the project that is being evaluated began, Ethiopia has seen changes in various dimensions and challenges that had a direct impact on the project implementation context. It is worth taking note of these changes and challenges that occurred during project implementation before reading the project findings. To this end, Ethiopia was plagued by conflict, drought, political unrest, and high inflation during the implementation of the project. The country suffered from unprecedented inflation, which affected some of the project activities, especially the livelihood component. The livelihood intervention's in-kind assistance procurement has been impacted, and the initial startup capital allotted was discovered to be insufficient (unable to buy a reasonable amount of inputs for the chosen business type). Furthermore, the project coincided with the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to restrictions on travel and assembly that affected the implementation and monitoring activities of the project.

3.1.2 Relevance

According to DAC (2019), relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives and design of the intervention meet the needs, policies, and the priorities of the project participants and partners/institutions and continue to do so even as circumstances change. Review of the project proposal revealed that the project was designed based on the analysis of the needs of children and youth connected to the streets. The project proposal stated that there were more than 600,000 children classified as street-connected children in Ethiopia. The proposal also indicated that 60% of homeless people in Ethiopia are born in a rural area and relocated to the capital (Addis Ababa), usually in search of opportunities to escape from tensions or rural poverty.

Key informant interviews and discussions with young people living on the streets revealed the push and pull factors that cause them to end up there, including peer pressure, poverty, family mortality, economic downturn, child abuse, and financial independence. Life on the streets itself drives them to sex work, and the lack of shelter leads to great abuse. As stated in the project document, life on the streets is an everyday struggle, children are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and most are discriminated against with access to basic services including education, health services, safe income sources, and safe recreational spaces unavailable. Street life is also particularly dangerous for girls due to sexual abuse, harassment, and theft.

Key informants from government institutions and the project team indicated that GOAL Ethiopia and the implementing partners had consulted with potential project participants during the planning phase of the project. The above-mentioned needs were unanimously confirmed by key informants and participants from children and youth FGDs both in Addis Ababa and Hawassa City. A key informant from the Addis Ababa Office, Women and Children office, described the relevance of the project as follows:

The problems of street children are obvious: they lack everything, including water to drink. They are rejected by the community. They have nothing to eat and no clothes for their bodies. They do not have a place / shelter to rest and spend the night. They are constantly chased by police officers. They are seen as a potential threat to the community (there is a general belief that they steal money). Only a few people (religious people) make an effort to support them. There are few nongovernmental organizations in this area to support them. The number of street children is increasing for various reasons, mainly due to conflict, poverty, and unemployment in rural areas of Ethiopia. '

According to this key informant, the interventions that were implemented to support street children and youth connected to the street were relevant to the needs of the project participants.

Another interview held with a government representative in Addis Ababa reflects this same reality. This informant stated: *“still right as we discuss, the number of streets connected children and youth has been increasing due to complex factors—push and pull, and in addition, recently, the conflict in the northern part of the country as well in other parts of the country has been enforcing the migration of children and youth and other people to come to the City.”*

Similarly, the relevance of the project becomes clear when a young informant from Hawassa, who has lived on the streets for more than 8 years, reports on his condition: *“When I was living on the streets, I even considered committing suicide because of all the problems I was facing. Thank you to God and the project, I am a different person today and even support others. It's incredible thing for me to be who I am today”*.

In-depth interviews conducted with youth and children also indicated similar findings. The project provided registered street connected children and youth with a space to stay in the day to access basic services (sanitation, hygiene, life skill training, numeracy and literacy, and recreational) and much needed psychosocial support that helped them to have a vision for the future and stay off the street. Furthermore, the selection of the location for the project was based on previous studies. In Addis Ababa, for example, the sub cities where street children exist were selected for setting up DIRC and making promotion of DIRC services to register street connected children and young people connected to the streets.

A review of the project reports indicated that the interventions implemented by the partners and GOAL Ethiopia under the four project outcomes revealed that the interventions were responsive to the needs of street-connected children and youth connected to the street. The various interventions and outcomes of the projects aligned with the overall objective of improving the well-being of street-connected children and youth and reducing their vulnerability to different abuses in Addis Ababa and Hawassa.

To determine whether the ChildSpace initiative was pertinent and in line with the organization's focus areas, the evaluation team examined GOAL's Strategy 2025. The overarching goal of the Child Space Project, which is to improve the welfare of youth and children connected to the streets, are in line with the strategic priorities of GOAL Ethiopia, specifically Goal 1 (people endure crisis) and Goal 2 (people pursue a sustainable, resilient and inclusive society). Similarly, the project's objective is aligned with Goal Ethiopia child protection policy's very intent that reads as: "we as an organization with a specific focus on vulnerable children is our duty (GOAL Ethiopia's duty) to ensure that our promotion of children's rights includes specifically protecting children from accidental harm as well as deliberate abuse within organizations intended for their benefit".

Additionally, the project's outcomes aligned with one or more of the implementing organizations' strategic goals, proving that the right partners were chosen to carry out the project. The objective and outcomes of the ChildSpace project are in line with the strategic objective- child education and protection of CoC and reduce gender based violence (GBV) that affect women and children of MCMDO.

From discussions with government stakeholders, the evaluation team noted that the project's interventions were relevant to the government's development priorities of improving the lives of urban destitute and reuniting street children with their parents. A key government informant in Addis Ababa from the MCMDO operation area stated the following in relation to the project alignment with government strategies and priorities: *"It was more than expected. The project aligned with our priority and contributed greatly to addressing the problem of children and youth connected to the street. It was extremely challenging for the city's administration to address the needs of a huge influx of people to the city, including children and youth connected to the street. We plan every year to reunify street children, but it was rarely implemented as we had no budget for the activity"*.

Covid-19, cost variation/inflation, and conflict or war in Ethiopia were some of the significant contextual variables that were noticed over the project period. Along with the rise in prices, these environmental factors had increased the number of street children and put strain on the project's

implementation. However, during the project time, there was no discernible growth in the project's budget.

Among the steps taken to stay relevant during the project period were reviewing the budget for livelihoods and reunifying street children, and providing support to both project staff and street children on Covid-19.

3.1.3 Effectiveness

According to the revised DAC criteria, "effectiveness" refers to the extent to which the intervention achieved its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups. As discussed in the introductory section of this report, the project had one objective and four outcomes. The overall objective of the project was to improve the well-being of children and youth connected to the street. The project proposal explicitly mentioned results that contribute to the overall objective of the project. The four outcomes are listed in the box below:

- Improved self-protection skills of children and youth against GBV, harm, and exploitation
- Improved livelihood of street youth and parents/caregivers to fulfill their development needs
- Enhanced life skills of children and youth through the provision of services
- Enhanced health lifestyle of children and youth

The review of the project report, and interviews conducted with key informants and discussions conducted with project participants based on the set indicators revealed that the project was effective in delivering the planned intervention. The following table summarizes the project's achievements as follows:

Table 2: The status of the project indicators

| Objective | Indicator | 2018- 2022 | | | |
|--|---|------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | | Target | Act ³ | Fem ⁴ | % ACM ⁵ |
| 1. Improved self-protection skills of children and youth from GBV, harm and exploitations | Negative coping mechanism among street-connected children and youth reduced | Reduced | Reduced | | |
| 2. Improved livelihood of Street Youth and parents/care givers to fulfil their development needs | Number of women, men and youth who accessed marketing skills | 1803 | 1823 | 1093 | 101 |
| 3. Enhanced life skills of children and youth through provision of services | Number of children re-unified in to their families | 1170 | 1087 | 2 | 90 |
| 4. Enhanced healthy life style of children and youth | Number of youth & children received health check and treated at the centers | 2350 | 1979 | 643 | 84 |
| | Number of youth trained in reproductive health | 8500 | 6614 | 4119 | 78 |

Improved self-protection: The project operated two DIRCs in Addis Ababa and Hawassa, where street-connected children and young people living on the streets received integrated services that included sanitation and hygiene services, life skills training, business skills training, sports and recreational activities, numeracy and literacy, sexual and reproductive health education, and much

³ Act= Actual

⁴ Fem= Female

⁵ ACM= accomplishment

needed psychosocial support. In-depth interviews conducted with street children and youth revealed that the services provided helped them alleviate their distress, understand themselves, and learn skills to cope with the challenges they often face on the streets.

The interviews with the caregivers (mostly young women) also revealed that they were exposed to all kinds of violence, harm and exploitation while living on the streets. Some of them were raped, and their rights were violated by men with whom they had informal marital relationships. These young women became victims of teenage pregnancies and eventually gave birth to children and faced many challenges. Two of the female caregivers interviewed in Addis Ababa reported that they had been abandoned by men with whom they had entered into an informal marital relationship and left the children with them. A care giver narrated her story as follows:

I am originally from Fiche town in the North Shewa zone. I had been told that Addis Ababa was a place where one could enjoy a better life. However, it was different that I ended up living on the streets where I was raped and got pregnant with my first child who is now 8 years old (I don't know his father) and I also have another son of 2 years (this time it was upon my willingness that I got pregnant by a man who was my boyfriend). Unfortunately, he abandoned me and my children; I don't know where he is staying.

The majority of the caregivers interviewed said that the project's psychosocial assistance and different training sessions had positively impacted their lives. They now know who to contact in the event of GBV and are more adept at self-defense. The majority of the caregivers who were interviewed carried on operating their businesses and were able to generate enough revenue to cover their daily needs for bread, rent, and sending their kids to school.

In addition to psychosocial support, the project has referred GBV survivors (when they able to identify) in the project area to government institutions and other NGOs or service providers. However, this referral mechanism was not developed and the project was not well designed to respond to the needs of GBV survivors. Interviews with project team indicated that there was no training conducted for project team on how to manage GBV cases and/or there were no services at the DIRCs that may address the critical needs of GBV survivors.

Life skills training and psychosocial support were among the main activities that most of the children and adolescents who benefited from the centers valued. These project participants witnessed that they had registered significant changes in their personal life management due to these two interventions. At drop-in centers, behavioral problems including addictions and traumatic experiences were addressed so that they would move on to the next phase of interventions after completing the rehabilitation phase. The project team conducts life skills trainings on a regular basis for enrolled street children and youth connected to the street. Children and young people connected to the street who were interviewed at the project sites consistently reported that the interventions have improved their ability to cope with life's challenges that they face as they live on the streets and work on the side roads. One of the young girls who is currently accessing the services from the center in Hawassa reported how the intervention was effective as follows.

'I often come to the center to take a shower and rest. I feel better when I come here because the project team welcomes me warmly and I participate in various training sessions. When I return to the place where I stay at night on the street or elsewhere to do various tasks, I use the skills I have acquired in training to protect myself. I have already stopped the addictions I used to practice. I have stopped drinking and smoking. I communicate confidently with people and explain myself better than before'.

Similarly, interviews conducted with children revealed that due to the training and orientation received at DIRCs, they now stay in the group, they are well aware of tricks of the perpetrators, stopped various addictions (negative coping mechanisms such as different addictions) and report to police officers when they face abuse or project team as part of their improved self-protection measures.

Similarly, the numeracy and literacy sessions conducted in the DIRCs were appreciated by the participants and the project team. In-depth interviews with the project participants revealed that the training helped the project participants to run their businesses smoothly as they were able to

calculate their business transactions and also read signboards and recognize locations. In addition, the numeracy and literacy exercises encouraged the project participants to continue formal education.

Enhanced life skills: Life skills are defined as a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner⁶. To this end, life skills training was one of the training packages designed and delivered by the project for street-connected children and youth enrolled to access integrated services in DIRCs. The interview conducted with the project team revealed that all children enrolled in DIRCs in Addis Ababa and Hawassa accessed life skills training. Discussions conducted with children and youth showed that life skill training is one of the activities that are liked most. Basic life skills provided readily available tools to deal with challenges/demands of daily lives connected children and youth face, from managing their emotions to making an informed decision. It also helped children develop their personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities, realize their true potential through learning to know themselves and others, and make effective decisions to live harmonically together in the society.

The improved life skills helped the registered children to cope with the harsh street life and helped most of them to decide to move to the next phase of interventions- reunification to families and/or integration to the community. To this end, 1087 (90% of the target) were reunified after family tracing and properly guiding the children to decide under the overall guidance of respecting the best interest of the child with the support of ChildSpace project. Girls made up a negligible fraction (0.2) of the reunified youngsters. Girls in both locations were interviewed, and the results showed that young girls are more interested in livelihood help for reintegration into their current communities (Addis Ababa and Hawassa) than they are in reunification. The evaluation team also observed that after participating in some of the awareness-raising and training programs offered at DIRCs, children and youth self-initiatedly reunited.

⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/azerbaijan/> accessed on November, 2023

Improved livelihood: Youth and caregivers who successfully rehabilitated in the DIRCs were supported with two types of interventions, training in entrepreneurial / business skills and/or vocational skills to improve their livelihood opportunities. Information obtained from project team indicated that at DIRCs, there were separated rooms for care givers accompanied by young children where they feed and sleep their children. This arrangement attracted care givers to attend the rehabilitation services provided by the ChildSpace project. Moreover, feeding demonstration at the DIRCs had enabled caregivers to gain knowledge on the value of balanced food for young children and how to prepare balanced diet for young children.

The key informants from the project team both in Hawassa and Addis Ababa reported that the vocational skills trainings were selected based on young people's preferences and market assessment. Upon completion of the training, the implementing partners offered job placements and on-the-job training in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that the trainees obtained employment or job security in a timely manner. Although so far no trace study has been conducted, the project team reported that most of their vocational trainees who graduated with one or more skills were employed in different companies. They are actively working to subsidize their livelihood in different companies. The evaluation team interviewed sample of these project participants and found that they work in one or more of the entrepreneurial skills they obtained or were employed in different sectors.

BA (the name changed) was trained in food preparation for three months with the support of the Childspace project. She has had a job in two cafeterias since graduating. She is currently working in a renowned cafeteria in Hawassa. She earns 3500 birr per month. She only works half of a day. She is pursuing other jobs in her free time. She confidently shared her current economic status with the evaluation team that she is now able to cover house rent and other living costs. She is additionally supporting her youngsters back home in the rural areas. She has a vision and hopes to achieve more in life in the future.

The review of the project report showed that 775 young people were planned to receive vocational training during the project period (2018-20220). To this end, 592 young people and/or caregivers (76% of the target) were trained in various vocational training courses during the project period, 65% of whom were female. Interviews with the project team revealed that some of the street youth who had started vocational training dropped out - they may have moved to other towns or cities or were involuntarily sent to concentration camps by the government. An interview conducted with experts in government offices in Addis Ababa confirmed that street children and youth were often taken to concentration camps in Addis Ababa and then to the regions. He added that from July 2023 to September 2023, street children were brought to a camp six times and then were taken to the regions.

The main occupational groups in which street-connected young people were trained included driving licenses, woodwork, food preparation, hairdressing, and the like. The project report indicated that the tuition and expenses for vocational training of the trainees (for rent and other issues) were covered by the project. Similarly, an in-depth interview conducted with trainees consistently confirmed that the vocational skill training was fully sponsored by the ChildSpace project including job placements. These arrangements of the project, as witnessed by the project participants, have contributed to the effectiveness of the intervention. Moreover, COC has worked with private institutions (trainers of the vocational skills) with a pre-arrangement that included job placements. Because of this pre-arrangement, these institutions worked intentionally to increase employability of the trainees sponsored by ChildSpace project. This initiative, as evidently reported by the project participants interviewed, contributed to the high effectiveness of the intervention.

The plan was to train 1028 young people/guardians coming off the streets in entrepreneurial skills. 1231 (120% of the target) were trained through the project's support so that they could engage in one or more businesses of their choice to improve their livelihoods and expand their sources of income. 57.5% of the trained project participants were female. Discussions with youth and a series of in-depth interviews with project participants confirmed that they are engaged in various businesses that, in turn, help them earn a living.

An in-depth interview with AK (name changed), who was from the southwest region of Ethiopia and lived on the streets of Addis Ababa for two years, reported that the income support has kept her off the streets and she was satisfied with her current status compared to the situation before the project. She lived on the street because her parents could not support her to continue her education. She was approached by the MCMDO street workers and enrolled in the DIRC in Addis Ababa. She said, "I was rejected by the community and had nothing to live on. Now, I have good relationships with community members and actively participate in social activities. I have expanded my business ("suki be derete", a mobile shop) and can make a living - now she lives in a rented house and was out of the street.

Another participant, HS (name changed), reported in in-depth interviews that "she had" developed an economic capacity to support two of her children and send them to school thanks to the support of the project'. She added that she saves 500 Birr per day for "Ekub"⁷

Enhanced healthy lifestyle: The project supported children and youth connected to the streets to get health services in the centers for minor illness and health services for major illness in the hospital or health centers with which the implementing partners established working relationship under referral mechanism. Furthermore, the review of project reports and the interview of key informants with the project team confirmed that health education, personal and environmental hygiene training, training and facilitation of peer discussion on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, STI and GBV were delivered during the life of the project. These interventions have greatly improved the healthy lifestyle of youth and children connected to the streets. In-depth interviews conducted with youth revealed the knowledge on HIV/AIDS. STI and reproductive health is high,

⁷ **Equb or Iqub (Amharic: ጳጳብ)** is an association of people in Ethiopian culture with the aim of mobilizing resources, especially finance, and distributing them on a rotating basis.

and the practice of using preventive measures for pregnancy and HIV / AIDs is also reportedly high, especially among street-connected girls who are predominantly vulnerable to sexual abuse.

The project staff commitment, the smooth relation of Goal Ethiopia and implementing partners with local government offices and the implementing partners' long years of experiences in implementing child protection projects were listed by key informants for the good performance and effectiveness of the project.

The evaluation team noted the following limitations with respect to the effectiveness of the project:

- The number of street children and youth enrolled each year after street worker activities in the target areas is very high. However, a small proportion of these children are transferred to exit strategies (either to be reunited or to find alternative livelihoods). The reasons for this, according to key informants, including the project team, are the limited budget, the high mobility of project participants, and the lack of services (accommodation and food) in the centers.
- The time allocated for the rehabilitation service (approximately 3-4 months) and for the exit strategy (approximately 6 months) was not sufficient compared to the minimum norms and standards set by MoWSA for these activities⁸.
- Some trainees found it challenging to obtain job after completing their vocational training, particularly in Addis Ababa, as they needed to present collateral and/or a government-issued identity card. They do not have these two things. CoC was able to address this difficulty in Hawassa in collaboration with the business sector, as the trainers also helped with employment. MCMDO discussed these issues with the government and came to some provisional resolutions, but the issue still exists today.

⁸ Rehabilitation from few days to 6 months and exit strategy for 1 year.

- Though integrated services were provided to the project participants by multi-professionals (health, psycho-social, livelihood expert), most of the services were rendered to them in group. The rehabilitation services were majorly provided in group and lightly tailored to individual needs.
- The project team reported that there was very little funding set aside for staff training. The ChildSpace Project provided support for two trainings that the project team mentioned: gender and safeguarding. As part of the norms and service standards for organizations that provide assistance to street children, regular staff training, staff meetings, and support sessions are supposed to occur.⁹

3.1.4 Coherence

According to the revised DAC criteria, ‘coherence’ refers to the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. Interviews conducted with the project team demonstrated implementing partners have some other projects with which they have created synergy. MCMDO used its TVET centers established by another funding source to train street-connected youths which have given a certain flexibility to enroll and coach them at the center for its effectiveness. Furthermore, MCMDO has a health project from which first aid kits were made available to street-connected children /youth. The project team made an effort to connect individuals in need of services but disqualified based on DIRC criteria (youth/caregivers over 24 and children under 7 years old) with other initiatives managed by implementing organizations, government agencies like women's and children's bureaus, and other like-minded organizations. However, the project team was unable to provide statistics to support these efforts since they were not tracked.

⁹ MoWSA (2020): Norms and Service Standard for Organizations Providing Services to Children in Urban Destitute Project

Similarly, implementing partners (COC& MCMDO) have worked closely with government and community where the project attempted to raise the awareness of community and government officers for increased cooperation and mobilization of resources. To this end, recreational activities and celebration of child day events were organized in cooperation with school communities, government offices, and other invited guests with active participation of street children themselves.

Additionally, interviews conducted with the project team both in Hawassa and Addis Ababa revealed that referral mechanisms were foraged with different NGOs including Hope for Justice, Ethiopia Family Guidance Association, and Timret Le Hiwot. To this end, CoC has been working with Cheshire Ethiopia Hawassa Branch in which more cases of PWD were linked for various disability related services. In Addis Ababa, MCMDO has been working with CURE Hospital (where children who have problems on their hands or legs). However, this initiative was not well developed and systematized. The development of robust and functional referral mechanisms will require additional efforts in the next phase of the project.

In terms of coverage, interviews with the project team and review of the project document showed that the project was inclusive and open to all children and youth connected to the streets with some restrictions in terms of age. To this end, street-connected children aged 7-18 and caregivers / women whose age does not exceed 24 are eligible to be registered .However, the project was deploying street workers to promote existing services in target areas. These street workers mobilized focusing on the areas where street children and youth exist in large numbers. However, since the number of street children and youth is increasing, the need is still high. Therefore, the interventions carried out aimed at improving the well-being of children and youth connected to the street were provided fairly to all children and youth connected to the street and were internally and externally coherent with other interventions in the organization and the project area. Likewise, most of the services provided at DIRCs have taken in to account the needs of girls and boys. However, few girls interviewed in Addis Ababa had a comment on hygiene and sanitation services, water is not available always and the existing toilet (one for girls), was not enough while similar comment was not reported by boys.

3.1.5 Efficiency

According to the revised DAC criteria, efficiency refers to the extent to which the intervention delivered results in an economical and timely manner. 'Economical' is the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts in the most cost-effective way possible compared to feasible alternatives in the relevant context. 'Timely' implementation means that actions are carried out within the intended time frame or a time frame that is appropriately adapted to the needs of the evolving context. As part of this approach, the evaluation team examined available data and responses from key informants on this topic.

Key informants reported delays in the start of the project due to the fact that the project period was set at one year. Although the project was implemented over a five-year period, the approval and signing of the agreement was done on an annual basis, which took up some time of the project period. Implementation and staff recruitment were delayed until the approval process was completed and funds were released to the implementing organizations.

Table 3: Budget utilization status of the project

| Year | COC | | % | MCMDO | | % | Total | | % of Utilization |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Budget | Expense | | Budget | Expense | | Budget | Expense | |
| 2018 | 195,000 | 194,202 | 100 | 195,000 | 195,129 | 100 | 390,000 | 389,331 | 99.8 |
| 2019 | 195,000 | 197,388 | 101 | 195,000 | 198,567 | 102 | 390,000 | 395,955 | 101.5 |
| 2020 | 195,000 | 193,545 | 99 | 195,000 | 193,533 | 99 | 390,000 | 387,078 | 99.3 |
| 2021 | 192,750 | 194,588 | 101 | 192,750 | 194,589 | 101 | 385,500 | 389,177 | 101.0 |
| 2022 | 197,750 | 197,750 | 100 | 197,750 | 196,864 | 100 | 395,500 | 394,614 | 99.8 |
| Total | 975,500 | 977,473 | 100 | 975,500 | 978,683 | 100 | 1,951,000 | 1,956,156 | 100.3 |

Source: Project Financial Report, 2023

The overall budget utilization of the project budget for the project period (100.3%) indicated that the allocated budget was used effectively to provide planned services to the project participants. Taking into account the total number of street-connected children and youth reached by the project (livelihood, re-unification, capacity building/training), on average 326 Birr was used to rehabilitate and support street connected children and youth. The social and economic benefits of the project of the rehabilitated, reunified, and reintegrated children and youth are discussed under the impact section of the project. These children and youth are actively participating in the economic and social activities of their community and become self-sufficient. To this end, the evaluation team is convinced that the value for money of the project was high and the benefits outweigh the cost.

3.1.6 Impact

According to the revised DAC evaluation criteria, the term "impact" refers to the extent to which the intervention produced significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Therefore, in this section, we will attempt to present the impact of the project on the lives of project participants based on the indicators established for the project.

At the objective level, the number of children and youth connected to the streets who accessed integrated services with the support of the project was set as a measure of the achievement of the improved well-being of street connected children and youth connected to the street. The implementing partners have been operating two drop-in centers (DIRC) to create safe spaces for children and youth connected to the street and provided integrated services that were evidently reported by project participants that their lives were changed by the services. To this end, 18, 184 (117% of the target) children and youth benefited from integrated services and achieved improved welfare as a result of which their vulnerability to abuses and harm was reduced. To this end, key informants, especially children and youth, who completed the rehabilitation phase successfully, reported that their welfare was improved. Such children were reunified to their families and hence supported to stay away from the street. Youth who successfully completed the rehabilitation phase and supported by the project to alternative livelihood witnessed that their lives were positively

changed. AK (name changed), 24 years old, from the MCMDO operations narrated how the ChildSpace project has positively impacted his life as follows.

I received daily available services from DIRCs, including life skills education. The project supported me to start a small business - 'jablo' selling small items on the street after training me in business skills. An estimated value of 3000 ETB items was provided to start with. I expanded the business and could support myself with the income I generated from the business. I used the income generated from the business to pay my house rent and financed my education. I resumed my education in grade 6 and reached grade 9. I bought an ox for my parents who are living rural area and supported my younger brothers with scholastic materials for the last two years.

IW (name changed) another youth from CoC's operational areas who lived almost his childhood on the street stated how the project impacted his life positively as follows:

"ብዙ ድጋፍ ተደርጎልኛል። ከቁሳዊ ድጋፍ እጅግ የለወጠኝ የሕይወት ክህሎት ትምህርቱ ነው፤ ራዕይ እንዲኖረኝ አድርጎኛል፤ እራሴን እየመራሁ ነው ያለሁት።
 which can be translated as: the Child Space project has provided me different supports. Above all the supports, the life skill education has changed my attitude and personality, allowing me to have a personal vision for my life. He continued: my current income is sufficient for my life. With the support provided for us by the project, I established a joint venture restaurant business with my friend. Our current capital is estimated to be more than 100,000.00 Ethiopian Birr. Our monthly net profit is more than 15,000 ETB. We have two employees. I am going to college with a degree in computer science, and my plan is to establish a printing enterprise. I have full of hope

and extremely inspired that I can achieve my dream. For all that has been done for me, I am grateful to CoC and its staff’.

Similarly, children and youth who participated in focus group discussions unamoiusly reported that the interventions of the project have tremendously impacted their lives. One of the youth FGD participants in Hawassa shared with the evaluation team his friends and his own attitudinal change as follows:

“አሁን ከእራሳችን ወጥተን ለሀገር ማሰብ ጀምረናለን። ሰርቴን መለወጥ ነው የምንፈልግው፣ ከዚህ በኋላ ለምንግስትም ለሀብታሰቡም ሸክም አይደልንም which can be translated as “We are now able to think not only of ourselves but also of others and of our country'. We want to work hard and realize our dreams. We are no longer a burden to the government and the community. ' "

In-depth interviews with young people revealed that they are aware of the use of contraceptive methods to avoid unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS and therefore the practice of a healthy lifestyle among young people on the street was practiced. Interviews with government officials also revealed that community and police officials have been sensitized to the need to support street children and youth and are therefore now cooperative with the project, in contrast to their previous hostile attitude. Through the implementing partner's encouragement of police officer collaboration, street children's understanding of the importance of reporting abuse instances and taking precautions to keep themselves safe was enhanced.

In addition, children and adolescents associated with the street became an issue in the health centers with which the implementing partners worked closely. These health centers provided targeted outreach services to street children and youth, including vaccinations, cervical screenings, COVID-19 support, and public health education, as they do for the general public. Before this project, a key informant from the Addis Ababa health center reported that street children were rarely approached by health facilities. Similarly, the attitude of the community, especially the

school community, where the implementing partners regularly organize awareness sessions, has changed drastically. They used to consider street children as a risk group for their safety and property. This attitude is now being changed. Eddir leaders have started working with MCMDO to mobilize funds to support these children. Schools with which MCMDO has established relationships have shown that they support these children. The evaluation team found that most of the street youth who participated in the in-depth interviews were currently attending school. Therefore, one of the impacts of the project was obviously to convince the street children that they have a future perspective and are going back to school.

3.1.7 Sustainability

According to the revised DAC criteria, "sustainability" is the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue after the project ends. Most of the key informants and project participants interviewed are optimistic about the sustainability of the project's net benefits. The project essentially comprises two intervention phases, the rehabilitation phase and the exit phase. Interviews with the project team revealed that the rehabilitation phase was carried out by professional staff from the implementing partners in rented houses in Addis Ababa and Hawassa.

To this end, the necessary measures have been taken to ensure the sustainability of the net benefits of exit phase interventions. The reunified children were provided with livelihood support. They were linked to relevant Woreda government offices, particularly Women and children office and schools, for continued support. They were enrolled to school to reinforce their stay at home. Their parents were provided with awareness of parenting style and coached to support their children to stay with them. A follow-up with reunified children was conducted by the project team with relevant stakeholders. To this end, an interview conducted with the project team revealed that over 85-90% of reunited children stayed with their families, which proved to be highly likely of sustainability of the intervention in medium and long terms. The vocational skill training was provided in cooperation with private sectors and followed by job placement and on-job training arrangements that ensured the effectiveness of the intervention and its sustainability. In addition, the awareness created in the government offices, school community, and key community leaders

(like Eddir leaders) are highly likely to continue and to be translated into actions with some extra support to these groups in the next phase of the project.

However, the evaluation team observed few gaps that may impact the sustainability of the project. The participation of the community and government in the management and operation of the centers was minimal. There had been no exit strategy put in place as to how to manage DIRCs involving the community and government. Therefore, the center's operation is less likely to continue as there was no preparation done to finance the center.

Additionally, GOAL Ethiopia is currently working with the same implementing partners on a new pilot project that targets the ultra-urban poor community and is only tangentially related to the successes of the ChildSpace initiative. In order to ensure the success of the project's livelihood operations, this new pilot project shall integrate the ChildSpace project's rehabilitation activities. Moreover, street children shall be among the main target group eligible to benefit from the project. As it stands now, street children and youth are not explicitly considered by the project. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of the gains of the project, a systematic linkage between Childspace project and new projects should be strengthened.

Similarly, project participants who were supported in business skills to run their own business were challenged due to lack of working space and less cooperation from trade and market offices. Though the project team attempted to link street youth/caregiver business operators with government offices to secure their support, no formal arrangement was granted to allow them to operate road side businesses or access working spaces, which can affect the continuity of their businesses. Therefore, to ensure the continuity of businesses, some actions shall be executed in the next phase of the project. To this end, create a sort of arrangements so that the project participants access working space or are allowed to work on road side business unlike the general population. Facilitate how project participants can access a personal ID / identification card and benefit from the general health insurance system that covers the poor.

3.1.8 Case/ success stories



Etagu, a 22-year-old young woman, was born and raised in a small village called Besketo. She was forced to marry at the age of 12 and was a victim of early marriage. When she realized that she was forced into the marriage, she decided to escape the condition and made her way to Hawassa city, presuming that she could get better life opportunities, though she ultimately ended up on the street.

Etagu lived on Hawassa Street for more than seven years where she faced different problems. Etagu described those years as 'full of all kinds of risk'. She said that “I suffered a lot and faced all forms of violence.’ Hunger and being hit by heavy rain during rain seasons and exposure to scorching heat during dry seasons, all are ugly facets of living on the on street”.

To escape street life, Etagu attempted all options but did not become successful as she faced exploitation by severe labor and her suffering continued despite her efforts for years until she joined the Child Space project. She joined the DIRC in Hawassa and received a range of services provided by the center under the ChildSpace project, including life skills, counseling, health checks up, and entrepreneurial business skills.

After attending business skills training, Etagu was interested in running a small business serving fast food and preparing traditional coffee. CoC’s social workers supported her to develop a business plan to kick off her business. Etagu immediately engaged in the business and within a short period of time had customers who regularly use her services, and she started making money. She was busy serving her customers who were waiting for her delicious fast food and traditional coffee when our evaluation team visited her in the Hawassa town on a street corner in a particular place called Paisa. Etagu came up with this business idea after obtaining various services provided by the ChildSpace project implemented by the Centre of Concern, including business skills.

Today, Etagu makes 600 Eth birr every day on average, of which she saves 100 ETB at the bank every day. According to Etagu, her total capital has reached more than 25,000 ETB. With the income she generates, she supports her family and pays the 1500 ETB monthly house rental cost. Etagu is married and has a 3-year-old child. Her husband is a shoe shiner who earns an additional income for the family. Today, Etagu and her husband, with the income they generate, even started supporting their relatives. They have been supporting Etagu's three sisters and her brother. She added that I am now in better shape and will no longer be on the street. Her plan is to support her son in his education and to establish her business in her own home. She concluded by thanking COC and the project team that she called a rescuer of her life.

Case 2: Tariku Sisay

Tariku, 17, joined street life in Addis Ababa after trying it out in Shashamane in 2007. He started living on the streets at the age of 13 and told why he started living on the streets in Shashamane as follows. "My father was harsh to me and my brothers. He was a drunkard. He sold our land. We had nothing to eat. He did not take care of me and my brothers". He added that his mother lived separately and could not support him either. As a result of the abuse and lack of money for the pen, Sisay said, "I dropped out of my education? That's why I started living on the streets in Shashamane after I dropped out of school.

Sisay arrived in Addis Ababa with three other street children. Sisay remembered that they were staying near the church in the Paisa area. After living on the streets for six months, Sisay was able to visit the DIRC run by the MCMDO. He was able to access the DIRC service through the invitation of his friends to the center in Addis Ababa. He recounted what he received at the center as follows: "I received life skills training and other services that improved my well-being." After a stay of three to five months. I received vocational training, "Yejibsem sira - painting and decoration of houses/buildings". After completing the training, he got a job after attending the training for 4 months. He narrated what happened in his life after his graduation

as follows: “I earned 200 birr per day with my new profession. With this income, I able to cover my all expenses.” He remembered the support that MCMDO gave him during attending the training. The project provided an allowance for house rent during training. In his free times, he decided to pursue- second profession- hairdressing, by his own income that he able generate from the first business. Sisay is barber now. He narrated that “I am earning 300-800 ETB per day as a barber in Addis Ababa. I am able to continue my education from where I left. I came to Addis Ababa after dropping at grade 3. Now, I am learning in grade 10.” In brief, he was empowered to support himself by the support of the project. Sisay confidently shared this with the evaluation team as follow: “I am supporting my brothers in rural area.” However, he has no plan to go back to home as his father did not change his behavior. He concluded that “he is grateful to MCMDO and the project team who received him with a bright face and facilitated his receipt of all the necessary support.”

Case 3: Chalachew Abebe

21-year-old Chalechew Abebe was born in a small village called Alem Ber, just a few steps away from the town of Gonder in northern Ethiopia. He remembers having frequent disagreements and arguments with his mother at the age of 15, which he says led to him being driven away from home and eventually living on the streets in the town of Gonder. His father was a former soldier who had separated from his mother and was unwilling to support him at school and achieve his goal like his peers.

Chalechew remembers that he lived on the street in the city of Gonder for almost a year, from where he moved to another city called Bahidar because he heard that he would get a better opportunity to live there. Unfortunately, things were not different for him and he faced the same life challenges he had faced while he was in Gonder. While living on the street, he carried various loads for other people from one place to another and did other odd jobs that earned him a small income to buy food to survive. Sometimes, when he had no opportunity to do such casual activities, he begged near churches to earn his daily bread. He recalls: “Life on the streets is full of problems where the danger to life is omnipresent; while I was sleeping on the streets, I was once almost drowned by a heavy flood, thank God my life was saved”. He also talks about problems he had with his language, such as:

“ጎዳና ላይ ስትኖር ምንም ዋስትና የለህም። ሰውም እንደ ሰው አያይህም፣ ሌላ ፍጡር አድርጎ ነው የሚያየው። ምንም ያክል ታማኝ ቢትሆን እንኳ ሰዎች አያምኑህም፣ መጠለያ የለም፣ ምግብ የለም” which is roughly translated as while living on street there is no life guaranty at all. People don’t recognize you as a human being rather consider you as if you were a different creature. Even if you are a trustworthy person, no one is a position to trust you and allow you to work. You can’t get food and shelter”.

When he was tired of trying everything and lost hope of better opportunities, he set off with other street children from Bahirdar to Addis Ababa, the country's capital, in the belief that he would get a better chance of education and work there.

Chalachew says: “I consider it lucky that I didn’t stay on the streets of Addis Ababa for long, as I was informed about MCMDO's services and opportunities by another beneficiary”. Following his participation in the ChildSpace project, Chalachew has accessed many services that have brought about a dramatic paradigm shift in his thinking and personality. He said bluntly, “the project has given me an incredible opportunity and has shown me that there is a huge potential out there and that I can change my life and the lives of others.”



Chalachew while working at his poultry firm

Chalachew is proud of the life and vocational training he has received as part of the ChildSpace project. He was funded to have training in shoemaking and leather goods at the Lideta Productivity Center, a government-run facility. After completing the training, he took an exam for a certificate of competency, which he eventually passed and was awarded a certificate for his skills in this area.

Chalachew wholeheartedly acknowledges the commitment of MCMDO staff in liking him with a job opportunity that suited his skills, which he had acquired at a factory called MK trading PLC that manufactured sole. He worked at the MK factory for four years, during which time he saved a little money from his monthly salary of ETB 1500.

In the meantime, Chalachew was introduced to his half-brother by his mother, whom he had never met before and who now lives in Addis Ababa, through his mother's phone line. Chalachew was more than happy when he got his brother as he had no relatives in Addis.

As time went on, the two brothers came up with a business idea of establishing a poultry firm but they didn't have sufficient money to realize this plan. They started looking for Micro Finance Institutions/MFI/ that would provide them loan. Their dream of establishing the joint firm of poultry farm had come true when they got a loan of 300,000ETB from an MFI called Awoch. With the loan Chalachew and his brother quickly started the firm by purchasing 500 egg laying hens in a rental compound for 10,000ETB. Chalachew says, it is now a year and five months long since they started the business and only two months remained to finalize loan repayment. He says the business is profitable and growing. Chalachew said that he is the manager of the firm and decision maker since his brother is running another business.

In the future, Chalachew's plan is to expand the poultry business and work at larger scale. His vision is to be a best entrepreneur and supporter of other children living on street facing similar problems he used to face when he was struggling with the life on street.

He concluded by saying "the services that I got from the project have lifted me up; my mind set has been completely changed. And now I am looking forward, and no challenges would stop me from achieving my dream. A big thank you to MCMDO and the ChildSpace project".

3.1.9 Lessons learned and challenges

Discussions with project team and key stakeholders identified the following lessons for future programming:

- The ChildSpace project was cost effective in that it reached a large number of children with a range of services.
- The most important needs of street children and youth are not food. Their most important needs are love, affection, and care, which they expect from others. If given space, they can tell moving life stories. Each of them has their own unique problems that ultimately led them to live on the streets. If you treat children and young people living on the street with love, it is easy to change their lives.

- The problems of children and youth connected to the street cannot be solved by a single organization. It needs coordinated efforts and effective collaboration among all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, the referral system and the network of other like-minded organizations are important mechanisms to effectively address the problems of street children and youth connected to the street.
- Reunification, provision of marketable skill and creation of small business for street connected children, youth, and families are effective approaches to be scaled up to tackle their multifaceted problems.
- While working with street-connected children and youth, time and patience are important to see how the services being provided are gradually making a difference in their lives.
- The widespread public opinion that children and young people living on the street are a challenge and have difficulty changing their behavior has been refuted by the project measures. Well-organized life skills training and psychosocial counseling for street children and youth can bring about a paradigm shift in the way children think and act.
- Providing staff with gender equality training is a crucial step towards the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Challenges faced during the project's implementation

- During COVID 19, meetings and movements were restricted and this affected provision of services in full scale at the DIRCs to the project participants thus delayed implementation to some extent. Another challenge that was raised across all the key informants interviewed was that the number of streets connected children and youth that were needing services vis-à-vis available budget not proportional. In both sites, throughout the project implementation, project teams were significantly overwhelmed by the increasing number of street connected children and youth who needed the services and in which only those planned targets were addressed. Key informants in Addis Ababa reported that the city administration is stretched by influx of large number of people including children and youth due to both push and pull factors. It has been found unusual for the cities that families with their children are nowadays living on the street of Addis Ababa compared to previous times.

- Inflation as was the case elsewhere has challenged the project team to procure essential items that were important to support the project participants to launch their businesses as well also for provision of services at the DIRCs.
- Another challenge that was faced during implementation was that concerned government line offices in areas where the children were reunified found less cooperative and sometimes, social workers incurred extra days to facilitate reunification of children with their parents, implying that more awareness raising to local officials at the birth places of children is needed for smooth reunification in the future.
- The ChildSpace project was indeed successful in enabling care givers/youth to start their own business. In relation to this, obtaining space where to run businesses was significantly challenging for project participants; implying that concerned government offices and stakeholders have to give utmost attention in providing workplaces for the project participants where they can run their business confidently.
- Baseline survey regarding street connected children and youth was not conducted that stakeholders don't know deeply as to the context of street connected children and youth (what were really the push and pull factors contributed to an increasing flow people including children and youth from the rural areas to the urban centers). The actual number of street connected children and youth was not known when the project was launched than available estimations by different bodies including government and aid organizations.
- In spite of the project's efforts, bringing behavioral change among certain groups of children was found difficult implying that more resources (time and energy) are required.
- On the other hand, street connected children and youth have reported that communities' attitude is still challenging in spite of certain improvements implying that more awareness and advocacy efforts to be launched in the future.
- Some of project participants were found less aspiring to change themselves despite series of sessions conducted by the project targeting mindset change. Such project participants were thinking that implementing partners were obliged to provide the services.

- Another concern reported by the project key informants , that may need further study, was that there was an increasing tendency of families to send their children to towns/cities where children were reunified hoping that their children benefits when they get a chance of reunification like those children who were reunified in their area.

4. Conclusion, and Recommendations

The ChildSpace project was designed based on the specific needs of street-connected children and youth, was relevant and continued to be responsive to those needs despite changes seen in the implementation context. Interventions or sequence of care implemented with the support of the project have contributed to the improved well-being of the street children and youth connected to the street. A review of project reports and interviews with project participants confirmed that the set objectives/ outcomes were achieved.

The sequence of care provided at the DIRCs helped street-connected children and youth alleviate their distress, understand themselves, and learn skills to cope with the challenges they often face on the streets. Interventions have improved the self-protection of street children and youth from abuse, harm, and GBV. Basic life skills provided readily available tools to deal with challenges/demands of daily lives connected with the street connected children and youth face, from managing their emotions to making an informed decision. It also helped the children to develop personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities, realize their true potential through learning to know oneself and others, and make effective decisions to live harmonically together in the society. One thousands of eight two children were reunified following their best interests and were monitored back home to ensure their continued schooling. The project team base on available monitoring data indicated that a significant percentage of the reunified children stayed with their parents continuing their education.

The livelihoods of street youth and caregivers were improved. 592 young people and/or caregivers were trained in various vocational training courses during the project period and were able to earn an income for their livelihood. 1231 young people / caregivers from the streets were trained in entrepreneurial skills and started one or more businesses, thus expanding their sources of income.

Health education, training in personal and environmental hygiene, training and facilitation of peer discussion on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, STI and GBV for street connected children and youth have greatly improved the healthy of street connected youth and children.

The project was inclusive and open to all children and youth connected to the streets with some restrictions in terms of age. Children connected to the street aged 7-18 years and caregivers / women whose age does not exceed 24 years were benefited from the project. The interventions carried out to improve the well-being of children and youth connected with the streets were provided fairly to all children and youth. The interventions were internally and externally coherent with other interventions in the organization and in the project areas.

The planned results and objectives of the project were achieved in most cases. Data obtained from project record indicated that 18,184 (117% of the target) street children and youth benefited from integrated services in the Drop in Rehabilitation Centers (DIRCs). Children and youth interviewed by the evaluation team reported that their well-being had improved as a result of the integrated services provided by the DIRCs and the measures taken by the project (training in vocational and entrepreneurial skills) to improve their access to alternative sources of income. As reported by key informants from government stakeholders and the project team, the children who were reunited with their families stayed off the streets, which improved their well-being. The young people who successfully completed the rehabilitation phase and were supported by the project in creating an alternative livelihood were also able to testify to the positive changes in their lives.

Notable measures have been taken to ensure the sustainability of the net benefits of exit phase interventions. The reunified children were provided with livelihood support. They were linked to relevant Woreda government offices, particularly Women and children office and schools, for continued support. The vocational skill training was provided in cooperation with the private sector and was followed by job placement and on-job training arrangements that ensured the effectiveness of the intervention and its sustainability.

However, few gaps were observed that may negatively impact the sustainability of the project. The participation of the community and government in the management and operation of the centers was minimal. A new project under implementation that targets the ultra-urban poor community is loosely linked to the gains of the ChildSpace project. Project participants who were supported with business skills to run their own business were challenged due to lack of working space and less cooperation from trade and market offices.

Recommendations (based on findings)

- 1) **Community participation.** The situation of street children reflects the vulnerability of their social environment. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the capacity of the family and community (including the school) to receive and take care of their young members.
- 2) **Advocacy and lobby efforts:** for increased government support of street children and youth (access to ID, health insurance, working space) and new policy framework that address these challenges on a sustainable basis.
- 3) **Networking and institutional cooperation.** Strengthen the referral system that was started with few NGOs and health institutions to include a higher number of NGOs, government offices, FBOs, Iddir associations and interested groups to increase the long-term impact and sustainability of interventions in this area.
- 4) **Strengthen individualized attention and tailor-made services.** It should take time and interdisciplinary knowledge to evaluate each participant's circumstances and create specialized life plans and services.
- 5) **Time of implementation:** A yearlong intervention was found to be short and hence to increase the life span of the project.
- 6) **Allocate a budget for capacity building** for staff who are regularly in contact with street children and youth including stress management and relevant training topics that make them effective in coaching and delivering the expected services.
- 7) **Minimum service quality standards:** Although there were plans of actions and sequence of activities which happened one after the other at DIRCs, minimum standards were not systematically set for the services. Therefore, develop minimum service standard taking

into account the norms and minimum standards set by MoWSA so that it is possible to ensure service quality at the drop-in centers.

- 8) The allocated seed capital for business start-up measures is deemed too low due to the altered context (it might not be enough to obtain necessary inputs for the chosen type of business), so the funding allocation for this project component needs to be revised for future planning.
- 9) To gather information about the program's impact and potential lessons for future programming, do a tracer study of the children and youth who left the program/graduated from the program.
- 10) In order to create mitigating strategies for upcoming programmes, evaluate the detrimental effects of the livelihood assistance package for reunified children on other vulnerable children who have never moved to a town or city.