



# Ethiopia Hotspot Annual Report

## 2019



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## 1. Operating context

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There continued to be positive political movement within Ethiopia throughout 2019 with revisions to important legislation regarding human rights and anti-trafficking efforts. In 2019, Ethiopia also experienced some minor political turmoil that impacted project activities in the short-term but did not have a long-term programmatic impact. Relevant updates for 2019 are summarised below.

**Ethiopia's Charities and Societies Proclamation 1113/2019 is adopted.** In 2018, Ethiopia's existing charities and societies proclamation underwent a review and some critical and important revisions were put forth. In March 2019, a new charities law was formally adopted and celebrated by many as an exciting moment of progress for civil society within Ethiopia. Although not all aspects were positively revised, NGOs are now able to engage in advocacy-related activities, something that was not allowed under the previous regulation. A consortium that provides resources on inclusive development progress within Africa, INCLUDE, noted the following about the new legislation:

It explicitly provides that all organisations have the right to engage in any lawful activity to accomplish their objectives. In other words, foreign and foreign-funded CSOs are no longer prohibited from engaging in advocacy and human rights work. In fact, the new law specifically encourages CSOs to engage in advocacy and lobbying in regard to laws and policies "which have a relationship with the activities they are performing."<sup>1</sup>

Given these recent changes, Freedom Fund is exploring opportunities to engage in more direct advocacy through the hotspot in the future.

**Coup attempt:** On June 22, it was reported that dozens were killed in a coup attempt in the Amhara Region and Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian government responded swiftly and took action against those thought to have been behind the coup attempt. During the coup attempt, attacks against officials happened in regions where our partners work, but things remained generally calm. There were some program delays due to the internet being shut down the week the violence occurred, but there were no long-term setbacks.

**Ethiopia's Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking Proclamation receives draft revisions.** Ethiopia's Proclamation No. 909/2015 went under review in October 2019 and revisions were made to address some of the existing gaps. Some of the points reflected in the revision, include recommendations that the hotspot had put forth previously, including incorporating a comprehensive migration management policy and assigning an exclusive body to ensure comprehensive services are provided to potential migrants, current migrant workers, returnee migrants and trafficking survivors. The revised law is anticipated to be ratified by parliament in 2020.

<sup>1</sup> <https://includeplatform.net/blog/ethiopias-new-civil-society-law/>

## 2. Progress Towards Systems Change

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### **Research to inform advocacy and future work**

In June 2019, Freedom Fund received a draft report from Fair/Square and Migrant-Rights.org that looked at potential opportunities to support Ethiopian domestic workers residing in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The research specifically considered the political and regulatory context enabling Ethiopian migrant domestic workers (MDWs) to travel to and work in the destination countries, the specific day-to-day challenges reported by Ethiopian MDWs, and good practices to address MDW needs identified.

Although the current situation of MDWs in Gulf countries is one that is assessed to be incredibly risky, isolating for individual workers and challenging given political and cultural barriers, the report did provide a few promising opportunities to explore. A select number of these recommendations are noted below:

- Consider advocating for recruitment agents to provide workers with a mobile phone and local sim card for the target migration countries. This could possibly be combined with automated check-in systems that prompt migrants to respond to messages seeking information on their well-being.
- Explore piloting a scheme on how to effectively incentivise the use of live-out domestic workers. Lower-income residents are typically unable to afford private rented accommodation in the Gulf, but live-out work can still be promoted, for example through the use of ethical cleaning companies, where workers live in company accommodation rather than an employer's home.
- Consider funding awareness campaigns in the Gulf states to address the issue of racial discrimination and counter the damaging stereotypes that significantly increase domestic workers' vulnerability to abuse.
- Help improve practical skills-based pre-departure trainings and supplement these trainings with rights training. Practical information about support that exists in each destination country and other general information on each country could also help better prepare migrant workers.

### **Exploring new opportunities for systems change**

At the end of 2019, Freedom Fund contracted Equidem Research and Consulting to work with the hotspot partners to collectively develop and implement an advocacy strategy. The scope of work will include identifying advocacy asks, assessing partner advocacy capacity and providing the training needed to engage in collective advocacy. Seeking to expand the civil society influence at the local, national, and regional levels, Equidem will also identify and, where relevant, connect with local coalitions. This scope of work will be implemented throughout 2020.

### **Systemic change promoted at the local level**

Throughout 2019, civil society partners continued to promote change at the local level through existing networks and knowledge of the grassroots context. These efforts helped prevent risky migration of community members and strengthened local government responses to better promote safer migration. Two examples of such efforts are highlighted below.

- To help prevent minors from migrating for domestic work, implementing partner Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) designed a system whereby the Kebele administrators cross-check applications for ID cards/passports with targeted local schools. This allows the kebele to identify minors

(those under 18) who are applying for an ID card and to deny their applications. Using this coordinated approach, 89 applications for passports of minors were identified.

- EDA also hosted a one-day consultative meeting with representatives from across government offices to discuss encouraging recent changes made to migration processes as well as identify areas to strengthen intersectional collaboration among different government departments to better promote the safety of migrant workers. During the meeting, some of the most challenging issues raised included the use of forged documents, illegal or unregistered brokers, and paperwork errors such as misspelling of names. One point of progress that came from the meeting was that the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BOLSA) and relevant educational representatives agreed to coordinate to verify the legitimacy of educational documentation required for migration processing.





## 3. Hotspot Outputs & Outcomes

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### 3.1 Headline Results

#### ***19,198 individuals supported through 897 community freedom groups***

In 2019, partners built upon key lessons learned under their previous grants and expanded the reach of the community freedom groups to reach over 19,000 individuals. Partners supported a variety of groups including community groups, school groups, and multi-stakeholder groups of local leaders. Different strategies are employed depending on the group type, for example, to help promote greater reach of safer migration messaging, community conversation groups are formed and meet for five consecutive weeks after which the implementing partners set up new community conversation groups. Other partners utilise existing, permanent community groups to help mobilise local systems in the prevention of trafficking and labour exploitation.

In Addis Ababa, implementing partner Association for Forced Migration (AFM), works with permanent community groups called iddirs, which engage members from every household in the community. In 2019, AFM expanded their successful model of iddir engagement into a new sub-city, Nefas Silk Lafto. AFM selected five areas of Nefas Silk Lafto and provided awareness raising on safer migration and developed 5 councils of iddir leaders to be ambassadors for safer migration. These leaders helped ensure that key messages reached iddirs throughout the sub-city. AFM also continued to work with iddirs that they had previously engaged to help promote the sustainability of their past work.

Additionally, community conversation (CC) groups were implemented in both the Addis Ababa and Amhara hotspot locations. These groups provide a mechanism to reach many people with messages on safer migration, share updates on changing policies and laws, and help identify women who may be in need of other services, such as psychosocial care. One partner that implements community conversation groups is the Organization for Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS). During this reporting period, OPRIFS reached 994 individuals through their CC groups where they discussed topics such as the risks of unsafe migration, safer migration planning, and the requirements under the current migration management system. The CC groups included participants who were returnees from the Middle East, some of whom were also trafficking survivors, and they were able to share their experiences and provide advice to the group.

Operating in the Amhara region, Beza Posterity Development Organisation (BPDO) raised awareness of safer migration through a school-group model in seven schools. The school groups focused on raising awareness of migration risks and also included sessions on self-confidence and life-skills. The students meet in groups of 15 over four separate meetings to cover relevant topics. At the end of the sessions, BPDO invited families to attend a closing program. This provided the opportunity for BPDO to raise awareness of the students' parents about migration risks and emphasise the importance of students remaining in school. BPDO also provided group psychosocial support to students who were identified as needing additional services to help improve their academic performance.

### ***5,167 individuals received social or legal services***

In 2019, the hotspot implementing partners provided a variety of social and legal services, including school supplies to help young girls stay in school, assistance in navigating the legal system for women seeking to migrate to the Middle East, and psychosocial counselling and support for returnees. Within 2019, implementing partner Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society (Agar) almost doubled their anticipated target and provided shelter-based support services to 230 women and children returning from the Middle East. Agar aims to not only provide survivors with shelter, but a range of services to help them successfully reintegrate to life in Ethiopia including counselling, family tracing, and vocational training for employment in Ethiopia.

Focusing on potential and aspiring migrants, Professional Alliance for Development (PADet), engages returnee migrants to provide key messages on their experiences and the risks of unsafe migration. Working with 12 returnees, PADet reached 500 women to discuss the challenges faced by migrant workers as well as ways to improve safety if work abroad is pursued. Similarly, Addis-based partner Bethsaida Restoration and Development Association (BRDA), focused on awareness raising within local schools. They provided this awareness raising through routinely conducting events where students could come and learn more about migration risks and the importance of staying in school.

### ***837 women received vocational training for both employment within Ethiopia and abroad.***

Now that bilateral agreements have been signed between Ethiopia and Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, some partners have shifted the focus of their activities to support women who, after consideration of all options and information available, still choose to pursue work abroad as domestic workers due to their socioeconomic situation. In 2019, more than half of vocational graduates were for those seeking employment as domestic workers abroad, with one partner more than doubling their target given the high demand from the community. Training was provided in collaboration with government training facilities. To help ensure that the centres are able to provide a high standard of training, EDA provided training to the vocational training centres to ensure that they were aware of the legal requirements aimed at protecting migrants from forced labour and trafficking, and could provide training to the standard set forth by the government of Ethiopia. Although there is notable progress regarding overseas employment, challenges with the migration management system persist.

It has been reported that over 50,000 individuals have received the required pre-migration training but are still in process of meeting the remaining legal requirements. Under the new system there are age restrictions, health checks, and training requirements before workers can depart Ethiopia. From what's been gathered to date, the backlog appears to be prompted by processing issues in securing visas and other necessary paperwork. For 2019 there were only about 7,000 workers who left Ethiopia in compliance with the legal process, despite the demand.

Vocational training is also being provided to those pursuing work in Ethiopia, many of whom are returnee migrant workers. Addis-based implementing partner Mission for Community Development Program (MCDP), provided vocational training to 70 returnees and assisted them to find employment after graduation. Those that wanted to start their own businesses, were provided support in collaboration with local government labour and enterprise offices. Additionally, MCDP provided comprehensive training to select graduates to assist them with "soft skills" in running a business effectively. This includes training on life-skills, entrepreneurship, financial management and leadership. Small amounts of seed funding were also provided to assist in establishing or expanding newly initiated businesses.



### **394 previously out-of-school children attend formal or non-formal education classes**

Through 2019, the hotspot partners identified children in vulnerable situations and provided education classes to them. Most of these individuals were reached through OPRIFS, who specifically target local child domestic workers. OPRIFS identifies and negotiates with local employers to allow their domestic workers to attend education classes in the late afternoon. The classes also allow the opportunity for OPRIFS to provide information on the risks of overseas migration and for child domestic workers to socialise with others and build trust with key teachers and social workers. This has led OPRIFS to identify and tackle situations of abuse or exploitation by addressing employers and collaborating with local government agencies as needed to promote the safety of the domestic workers. In addition to these education classes, OPRIFS helps employers and domestic workers maintain a healthy dialogue and resolve conflicts.

## 3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives

### Hotspot Objective 1: Generate improved understanding and practice of safer migration amongst source communities.

In 2019 we ushered in the second phase of the Ethiopia Hotspot. The second phase included partnerships with 10 previous implementing partners and an expansion into two new areas: the Nefas Silk Lafto sub-city of Addis Ababa and Kemissie town in Amhara.

Despite some of the delays due to project set-up, the implementing partners have reported reaching a variety of existing and new beneficiaries and have provided social and legal services to 5,167 new individuals and have reached 19,198 people through various community freedom groups.

### **Support provided to 8,190 schoolgirls to prevent school dropout and raise awareness of safer migration**

School groups allow for safer migration messages to be conveyed to many students at a time and to encourage students to stay in school and only consider migrating for employment once they have completed their education. Partners in Amhara have collectively worked together to develop a manual for conducting school groups to promote consistency across projects and help ensure that best practices and learnings are reflected in the implementation of such groups. The below demonstrate some key activities and areas of impact as supported by school groups.

- **Equipping girls to be ambassadors of safer migration at school:** EDA selected 103 girls from local schools to attend a training on how to facilitate school groups. School directors were also invited and participated in the training. The objectives of the training were to equip student leaders with the information needed to effectively lead school groups and educate their peers on the risks of migration and the importance of staying in school. The training sessions cover topics such as conceptual clarification on migration, improving self-confidence, methods for making informed decisions, methods to identify illegal brokers, tools for resisting peer pressure, and tips for improving academic performance. After completing the training, these student leaders conducted peer sessions in ten different schools, reaching 2,026 girls. The groups met consecutively for four weeks.
- **Returnee migrant workers share lessons learned with schoolgirls.** To help provide accurate and insightful information, implementing partner Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development (MSD) works with returnee migrants from the Middle East to present during information sessions with selected schoolgirls.

Through this model, 1,680 schoolgirls have participated in the training and are now able to convey similar messages to peers and friends within their local schools.

### **Utilising media to promote awareness of safer migration and prevent human trafficking**

During this reporting period, MCDP provided a one-day training to media professionals, including those working in television, print media, and social media. The training focused on safer migration concepts, trends of irregular migration, human trafficking, overseas employment, and other relevant topics. During the training, most participants noted the significance of the training as an important aid in helping them provide relevant information to the public.

MSD directly used media platforms to promote safer migration through the use of radio. Through broadcasting an awareness raising program for 24 weeks, it is estimated that over 60,000 listeners have been reached. The broadcast has included experiences of returnees and legal avenues for pursuing overseas employment. MSD has found that the radio broadcast allows for a greater reach of key safer migration messaging in comparison to community conversation groups, which can offer greater depth in the material, but has a limited reach. To help strengthen the impact of the radio broadcast, MSD routinely conducts listener groups every 15 days. This allows for them to get direct feedback, but also provide more details on trafficking prevention for those that participate in the listening groups.

### **8,652 potential and returnee migrants reached through community conversation groups**

Community conversation (CC) groups are implemented in both the Addis Ababa and Amhara hotspot locations. These groups provide a mechanism to reach many people with messages of safer migration, provide updates on changing policies and laws, and help identify women who may be in need of other services, such as psychosocial support. In Amhara, the partners have collectively developed a manual for implementing community conversation groups, which has provided the partners the confidence to implement the groups with efficiency and incorporate best practices. One partner that has had a significant reach through the community conversation groups is PADet. In 2019, they reached 3,202 individuals through these groups and have reflected that it's an effective approach that allows for active discussions on migration concerns and assistance in resolving challenges faced by prospective migrant workers.

### **Evaluating and strengthening services for trafficking survivors**

To help track and monitor shelter-based services, Freedom Fund contracted Dr. Javita Narang to evaluate the use of Agar's standard operating procedures (SOPs), which were developed through support by Freedom Fund in 2017-2018. Dr. Narang visited Agar and conducted an on-site rapid assessment of Agar's use and implementation of the SOPs. Based on findings from the rapid assessment, Dr. Narang provided training to Agar staff to help strengthen their service delivery.

The evaluation found that there is good staff understanding of the SOPs, although they are not being fully implemented based on limited resources. Furthermore, the assessment found that staff conveyed pride in the SOPs as they have received recognition from various agencies, including government departments within Ethiopia and international agencies, for the unique initiative of the SOP development. As a result, Agar recognises that they are perhaps one of the only organisations within Ethiopia and one of the few internationally, to have developed SOPs with this detail and clarity. Additionally, since the finalisation of the SOPs in 2018, Agar has developed a Life Skills Training Manual and Health Education Manual. These were identified during the SOP development process and were listed as important steps for strengthening life skills and basic care and support service delivery respectively. Similarly, a few missing forms (as per the SOPs)

have been developed, such as the 'Assessment Form for Vocational Skills Training' and the 'Discharge Assessment Form'.

Gaps were also identified including integrating alternative therapy techniques in mental health approaches and limited staff capacity. In 2020, Freedom Fund staff will meet with Agar to better understand these concerns and explore ways to support Agar in addressing these challenges.

## Hotspot Objective 2: Improve economic outcomes to support informed decision making

### Providing training for women who chose to migrate

- **Support provided to strengthen local institutions to provide training in domestic work:** Under the new legal requirements, women who wish to migrate as domestic workers are to complete vocational training in domestic work, pass an exam to earn a certificate of competency (CoC), and attend pre-departure training. To help ensure that institutions are equipped to provide quality training to women pursuing legal migration, EDA provided a local technical and vocational education training (TVET) centre with household items and appliances found in homes in the Middle East to help women learn how to operate appliances, and be more professional domestic workers.
- **Training for women who chose to migrate to enable them to pursue the legal pathway:** Now that bilateral agreements have been signed with Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, some partners are helping support women who, after consideration of all options and information available, choose to migrate. In Amhara, BPDO has assisted women to attend vocational courses on domestic work and has provided financial support so they can process the legal requirements such as securing a passport, getting medically screened, and attending pre-departure training. Such support may help aspiring migrant workers to better manage their migration journey and prevent exploitation within the process.

### Improving practices for monitoring the impact of vocational training.

Freedom Fund contracted ATL Consulting, a local Ethiopian-based consulting firm, to conduct an assessment of the livelihoods and vocational training activities implemented by the Freedom Fund partners. The purpose of the assessment was to gather information on the current livelihood activities of partners, capture the expectations of project participants, measure the impact of the approaches, identify other promising approaches outside the hotspot, and provide recommendations for future programming.

The report highlighted a number of strengths, including high vocational training completion rates, improvement in confidence and communication skills and quality of training methods and materials. Areas for improvement noted included: conducting market assessments to inform areas for vocational training, improving participant understanding of skills needed for specific jobs, better post-training follow-up and support and provision of equipment needed for launching a new business.

The findings from the report were presented at an all-partner meeting and, along with Freedom Fund staff, partners developed and agreed to a set of guidelines to incorporate the learnings set out above and improve implementation and monitoring of livelihood activities. Freedom Fund also contracted a separate local

consultant to assess and improve partner monitoring and follow-up of livelihood activities. This follow-up will be conducted in 2020.

### Hotspot Objective 3: Engage with and influence systems to better promote safer migration and respond to migrant worker needs

#### Revitalisation of anti-trafficking taskforces

- **Engagement of taskforce in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city:** Within Ethiopia, there is a structure to support every woreda with an anti-trafficking taskforce. The anti-trafficking taskforce structure exists at every level of government, from national to local, and is made up of key stakeholders at that level of government. Within the two Nifas Silk Lafto woredas in which BPDO is working, the taskforces were non-functional. To help correct this, BPDO worked closely with Nifas Silk Lafto sub-city officials to identify and re-establish taskforce members. In close collaboration with BOLSA, BPDO provided support to the taskforce members through a two-day long training engaging 35 members. The trainings covered the roles and responsibilities of the taskforce, relevant Ethiopian anti-trafficking laws, as well as information on Ethiopia's overseas proclamation and the experience of Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East.
- **Taskforce established and supported in Kemise:** In 2017, BPDO helped revitalise the taskforce in Kombolcha, the town in Amhara in which they implement their Freedom Fund project. This year, they expanded project activities into Kemise, another town in Amhara, and found that the anti-trafficking taskforce there was non-functional. Using their experience in Kombolcha, BPDO engaged in similar activities in Kemise. Through these taskforces in Kombolcha and Kemissie, there are 70 members who have been appointed. Freedom Fund will be closely following-up with BPDO to see how they can continue to build the capacity of these taskforces to be an effective force to prevent trafficking within local communities.

#### Engagement with Government Offices in the Amhara Region

**Informal migration channels intercepted:** At the end of October, Program Advisor Meseret Bayou travelled with the head of BOLSA from South Wollo Zone to meet with 135 aspiring migrant workers that had been intercepted using an informal migration route. Majority of these individuals were from the Amhara region, some of whom were under 18, and were being held at a local police station. They were hesitant to provide the names of those helping them and so identification of the recruitment agent was not possible at the time. Working with local implementing partner PADet, most of the individuals were able to be identified by community conversation facilitators and anti-trafficking taskforces. The Justice Office asked Freedom Fund if they could provide additional support for awareness raising. There is a growing concern with recruitment agents using informal migration routes, exploiting potential migrants' desire to avoid the bureaucracy of the newly initiated formal process. Additionally, there have been delays in processing visas, which has left qualified and trained migrant workers in a holding period, which may make informal processes more attractive.

**Encouraging improved regional coordination:** In November, Country Representative Daniel Melese, held a convening with government representatives in the Amhara region's capital city of Bahir Dar. Regional government representatives in attendance were from the Attorney General's Office, BOLSA, Women and Children's Affairs, TVET, CoC examination centres, regional police, and the city mayor's office.

The meeting, which was organised and supported by the hotspot, included presentations from Freedom Fund on our work within Ethiopia and reflections on some of the promising practices we have learned in promoting

safer migration. Government representatives also presented on how their offices engage in the migration processes and some of the challenges they are facing. A key challenge noted was the lack of coordination among their respective offices. They discussed hosting regular quarterly meetings, something that Freedom Fund may want to consider supporting in the future, perhaps assisting with some of the initial meetings. Other key action items are summarised below:

- *Follow-up with recruitment agents:* BOLSA planned to immediately call all recruitment agents together to directly hear from them what they are experiencing and to clarify with them their legal duties. There are concerns that some of these agencies are operating outside the legal framework, including holding passports until the training is completed or providing training on-site. A meeting of recruitment agents in Bahir Dar would work well since many of them are based in the city and have branch offices throughout other cities and areas in Amhara.
- *Ensuring fair distribution of job orders:* One concern noted during the discussion was on the fair distribution of job orders among the regions in Ethiopia. Regional representatives made plans to follow-up with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) to understand how this process is being managed at the federal level.
- *Improving coordination among organisations focused on migration:* It was noted during the meeting that there are numerous organisations in Dessie working on migration, yet there seems to be no strategic coordination among the various players. The government was asked to clarify their role in helping better coordinate among various organisations.

The Freedom Fund will follow-up with government representatives from South Wollo Zone to support changes at the regional level.

**Action items identified for improving migration management processes in Addis:** On December 19<sup>th</sup>, the hotspot organised a meeting with Addis representatives in order to explore coordination among the different agencies, receive an update from BOLSA on overseas employment, and to identify challenges and opportunities. Representatives in attendance were from MOLSA, BOLSA, Women and Children's Affairs, TVET, CoC examination centres, recruitment agencies, and recruitment agent networks.

During this meeting, BOLSA presented on a monitoring report that had been conducted on recruitment agents. The report looked at Addis employment agencies in six sub-cities. There were monitoring visits conducted to 37 agencies, out of a total of 739 registered within Addis. Out of the 37 agencies visited, BOLSA found that only one was in complete compliance with the regulations. Nine of the agencies were found to be holding passports of potential migrants, 13 agencies were closed during business hours, and seven agencies did not have adequate space to provide pre-departure training. Furthermore, among the agencies that had sent migrant workers, none had been in communication with the Ethiopian embassies in the countries of destination. By law, embassies should be notified when workers depart Ethiopia.

Based on the findings from the monitoring report and discussions at the meeting, it was agreed that BOLSA would host a training for recruitment agencies on minimum requirements. BOLSA also agreed to work closely with the employment agents' association, given that a key complaint raised was that they have not been working closely with them in order to assist agencies in being legally compliant. They also discussed how they would be taking measures on agencies found to be holding passports.

Representatives from TVETs and CoC examination centres also presented on findings from a federal monitoring report that examined private and public training institutions. Out of 91 registered centres, monitoring visits were conducted at 86. Based on the findings, only six of them were noted as "excelling" while



13 were noted as meeting the minimum requirements as set by the government. Based on the review, 18 of the agencies have been closed and six were issued warning letters. One big concern is that recruitment agents are providing referrals to TVETs, which is illegal.

In addition to the issues identified at the training centres, the CoC examination centres also received poor marks on the quality of services being provided. One example of this was a trainee who tested for four competency areas, but when issued the certificate of completion, 11 areas were noted. Based on these findings, it was discussed that there should be more close collaboration between regional and federal authorities, as the federal authorities are the only ones who can suspend licenses for TVETs. Additional training was also recommended for those at all levels of the migration management system.





## 4. Supporting a Community of Practice

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### **Engaging returnee migrant workers in advocacy**

Many of the Addis partners collaborated in hosting an event on international migrants' day in December. Through a planning process at the quarterly community of practice meetings, they formed a returnees' advocacy group, representing two returnees from each participating organisation. Once the returnees were identified, there was a training conducted to make sure that the group had conceptual clarity on migration messages and to ensure that there would be consistency with terminology used among the group. The returnee group attended the international migration day event and shared their stories and experiences.

The group would like to be a voice for other returnee migrants and potential migrant workers. At the next community of practice meeting in early 2020, a key agenda item will be to clarify the role of the group and the individual roles of the participants. Agar and OPRIFS are currently helping oversee the logistics as the group develops, but the ultimate goal is for the group to be self-sustaining.

### **Standardising practices and sharing lessons learned**

Through the community of practice in Amhara, partners continued to collaborate in improving the implementation of community conversation groups. The partners have taken lead over the past couple of years in creating and revising a guide for implementing these groups in an efficient way in order better raise awareness about safer migration and provide updates on changes in migration policies. Through the regularly scheduled community of practice meetings, one partner had a community worker present to the other partners on how they have been implementing the community conversation groups and how they are training the community group facilitators. These types of presentations allow for partners to not only learn from one another, but also allow for standards created to be continually reviewed and improved upon.

### **Freedom from Slavery Forum in Addis Ababa**

The Freedom from Slavery Forum was hosted by Free the Slaves from December 10-12 in Addis Ababa. Freedom Fund supported six Ethiopia hotspot partners to attend as well as representatives from the India, Nepal, and Thailand hotspots. To help promote cross-hotspot collaboration, partner dinners were held and visits to Ethiopia implementing partners were attended by two Freedom Fund partners from Nepal and India. Freedom Fund Ethiopia Country Representative Daniel Melese was on the advisory board for the forum and assisted in planning the event and participated in one of the conference's panel discussions.

## 5. Case Study

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*Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) is a local Ethiopian organisation that is an implementing partner of the Ethiopia Hotspot in the Amhara region. Working with local communities, they implement a variety of activities to raise awareness of safer migration, engage and build the capacity of local institutions to better address and prevent human trafficking, provide job training and support to women looking to work within Ethiopia, and assist aspiring migrant workers to comply with legal requirements for migration. The below case study highlights the variety of support they are able to provide in promoting safer migration including providing support to returnee migrants, assistance in accessing government services for migration processing, and post-migration monitoring.*

Fatuma is from Dessie town in the Amhara region. She has been employed as a domestic worker twice in the Middle East, both times in Saudi Arabia. The first time she travelled informally, coordinating with a local broker in Ethiopia who did not consult with her family, despite the fact that she was only 17 years old at the time. After working for two years in Saudi Arabia, Fatuma was deported and returned to Ethiopia with no earnings.

After returning to Ethiopia and living with her parents for two years without employment, she was selected by implementing partner EDA to participate in business training and subsequently received start-up capital to launch her own business. As part of the project, EDA also provided life-skills training and information on safer migration and the risks of human trafficking.

After almost two years of running her own business, Fatuma decided to try and migrate again, hearing that the ban on migration for domestic work had been lifted and that there were now formal channels available. She consulted with EDA to learn more about the opportunity and with EDA's support, was able to complete the legally mandated training on domestic work through a local training institute. After receiving her certificate of completion, she contacted a local employment agency that was able to assist her in traveling to Saudi Arabia through formal processes.

Fatuma has been in Saudi Arabia for over nine months and EDA has been able to monitor her working conditions through both the IOM and through the Ethiopian employment agency. Fatuma reports that she is happy with her employer and work. She notes that she was better prepared this time than the last time she came to Saudi Arabia and that she feels more confident in completing her daily house chores, given the predeparture training and information she received. She noted, "Now I can get my salary regularly and transferred through my personal [bank] account, which I opened while still in Ethiopia." She also noted that she has a monthly day off and is able to call her family back home in Ethiopia. She has also already received a raise given her excellent work. In the future, Fatuma hopes to return to Ethiopia with enough savings to live a better and more independent life.

## 6. Independent Evaluation & Research

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### **Migrant Domestic Worker Experiences**

In addition to the specific areas for promoting systems change previously noted, the Fair/Square and Migrant-Rights.org research also identified key findings on MDW experiences in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. These findings were identified through interviews with a variety of stakeholders including but not limited to returnee migrants, prospective migrants, current MDWs in Gulf countries, government officials, multilateral representatives, and select Freedom Fund partners.

The report provided detailed findings on several different dimensions, but some of the key findings are summarised below:

Ethiopian nationals working in the Gulf are in need of better support from the Ethiopian government. Properly trained, resourced and supported labour attaches may make embassies more effective and responsive to requests from migrant domestic workers. Although the scale of the problem may outpace the capacity, strengthening labour attaches could help start to address cases of labour abuse and exploitation.

Shelters in destination countries provide a crucial safety net, but workers have already left employment when they arrive at a shelter. Shelters can serve as a location for the provision of needs, including legal assistance, but workers' ability to access remedies is severely curtailed by power imbalances and slow and dysfunctional justice systems.

Isolation of workers was often severe and domestic workers were often confined to the house. In the Gulf there is strong fear that workers who congregate together (e.g. in community groups) will conspire to leave their employers to work freelance, or for better conditions.

Women are frequently denied a phone or the ability to contact family, embassies or recruitment agents.

As the Ethiopia Hotspot continues to explore potential areas of engagement of MDWs in countries of employment, these findings provide a helpful starting point in identifying areas for further exploration.

### **Research to examine recruitment practices<sup>2</sup>**

In late 2019, Freedom Fund launched a three-year research project to develop models of responsible recruitment for low-wage cross-border migrant workers. Although the focus of this research is Ethiopian migrant workers, the findings will also have implications on ethical recruitment best practices for other countries. This research is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and is being implemented by Freedom Fund and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The research project commenced with a desk-based review to consolidate global evidence on models of responsible recruitment. The desk review included identifying and reviewing responsible recruitment initiatives in countries around the global, which was then supplemented by interviews with experts. Preliminary findings

<sup>2</sup> Summary adapted from "Meneshachin Scoping Study: A Global Synthesis and Analysis of responsible Recruitment Initiatives Targeting Low-Wage, Migrant Workers."

of this review do not promote the duplication of existing models, but rather highlight how promising examples can be further tested for their efficacy in promoting worker rights and safety. The findings from the desk review will be released in 2020 and the next phase of the research will look to test elements of select recruitment models.





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