



Ethiopia Hotspot Annual Report

2020

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1. Operating context

Covid-19 Situational Update

In response to the covid-19 global pandemic, the government of Ethiopia took swift action to contain and prevent the spread of the virus. All schools, universities, and restaurants were closed, and a ban was put in place on public gatherings. On March 23rd, Ethiopia closed its borders and passengers arriving by flight were required to partake in a mandatory 14-day quarantine. Furthermore, specific regions in Ethiopia were put under a state of emergency, including Amhara where the Freedom Fund supports local implementing partners and has a small branch office. The government also declared that the August election would be postponed until public health concerns were determined to no longer be a factor. This prompted some backlash from some who oppose the current government as this is an important election that will include the office of the Prime Minister.

In August, the Ethiopian Government announced that they were lifting the state of emergency that had been declared due to covid-19. The lifting of the state of emergency meant the beginning to a return to normal life, including public transportation resuming pre-covid operations, group meetings no longer had restrictions on the number of people in attendance, and schools were reopened shortly thereafter.

Impact of covid-19 on programmatic activities and returnee migrants

Given covid-19 risks, Ethiopia-based Freedom Fund staff took decisive action and suspended all site visits and partner meetings in March and transitioned to mainly working from home. Implementing partners delayed or suspended the majority of project activities and many partner staff also began working from home in the month of March. One partner that continued to implement a variety of project activities was Agar, which provides shelter and mental health support to returnee migrant women.

The virus forced many migrant workers out of their jobs, causing many to return to Ethiopia unexpectedly. In December, the IOM reported that between the beginning of April and December 22nd, Ethiopia received over 43,00 migrant workers as summarised in the table below. Many of these returnees were in a particularly vulnerable situation and in need of additional support in returning home given the suspension of public transportation in select regions. Given the needs of returnees, support was provided to Agar through the Emergency Response Fund to launch a temporary emergency shelter. This is noted in more detail below.

Although many project activities were able to resume in August, the needs of returnee migrant workers continued to be pressing. In November, the Freedom Fund launched the Ethiopia Bete reintegration Project, which was designed to respond to these needs and provide repatriation support for returning migrant workers coming from Lebanon. This project, as well as the Freedom Fund's response to covid-19 through the Emergency Relief Fund (ERF), is summarised in a later section of this report.

Ethiopia passes new anti-trafficking law

In April, a new anti-trafficking proclamation was approved. The Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation (Proclamation 1178/2020), maintains key elements of the previous law, but includes changes related to the language defining human trafficking, criminalisation as it pertains to association with acts of trafficking, specifications as to the application of the death penalty in prosecution of human trafficking cases, reframing of the language around the duty to report cases, and the removal of immunity and use of special privilege from prosecution. The most relevant change for Freedom Fund programming was that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was given responsibility to oversee human trafficking and coordinate with other government bodies as necessary. This will hopefully allow for better identification and prosecution of human trafficking cases related to migration concerns.

Political unrest leads to violence

In 2020, political tensions rose in Ethiopia, in part due to the delayed election as a result of covid-19. The two events detailed below are demonstrative of some of the civil unrest seen over the past year. Although the impact to program activities has been limited, political unrest is an area that the Freedom Fund team is regularly reviewing as tensions are expected to continue and may become present in other regions as the election date is scheduled and draws near.

- **Political unrest leads to country-wide internet outage:** On June 29, Hachalu Hundessa, a former political prisoner and popular singer and activist, was killed in Addis Ababa. Hachalu (from the Oromo ethnic group) had spoken out for many years against the previous administration and celebrated the appointment of Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister in 2018. After the killing of Hachalu, protests broke out mainly in Oromia and Addis Ababa. Thousands were arrested in connection with the protests and over 150 people were killed. In response, the government initiated an internet outage that lasted for over two weeks in July, limiting contact between the Freedom Fund head office and branch offices in Ethiopia.

Tensions within the Oromia region are likely to persist and will not be easily resolved. The Oromo people are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group and have fought for many years for the rights of the Oromo people and have advocated for better representation in government. Some of these long fought for requests were partially realised with the appointment of Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister, who is Oromo. This is not the first violent event since Abiy took office and political unrest is expected to continue, especially as the election, which is now scheduled for June 5th draws near.

- **Unrest in Tigray leads to military action** At the beginning of November, violence broke out in the Tigray region of Ethiopia due to ongoing and increasing tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the central government of Ethiopia. The TPLF has been outwardly critical of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's decision to postpone the election due to concerns about the spread of covid-19. In defiance of this decision, they held elections in the Tigray region in September. Tensions came to a head on November 4th when the central government reported that the TPLF attacked Ethiopian military outposts in the Tigray region, including one in the regional capital of Mekelle. Fighting between forces ensued with central government declaring victory after retaking Mekelle on November 28th.

2. Progress Towards Systems Change

Engaging returnees to provide better outcomes for future returnees and survivors of trafficking

Agar has been providing support to returnees through both their existing shelter and their emergency shelter established via support from Freedom Fund's Emergency Response Fund. Given their experience, Agar has been analysing these cases and reporting to the Ministry of Peace on the situation of returnees and the support that they have received. The Ministry of Peace is responsible for Ethiopia's covid-19 response efforts and Agar hopes that sharing their experiences and providing specific examples of returnee needs will prompt local agencies to provide better support to returnees and more adequately equip quarantine centres to better address returnee needs.

In addition to engaging with local agencies to improve covid-19 response efforts, Agar also assisted returnees in pursuing a case against a broker. During the reporting period, Agar received 65 individuals who were identified while trying to cross the border from Ethiopia to Sudan. These individuals had been promised work by brokers, but Agar identified that most of them were in a situation of debt bondage with the broker. While receiving support at Agar's centre, they recognised the actions of the brokers and began to pursue a case. Agar noted that they wanted to pursue the case in part to help prevent such a situation from happening to others. The outcome of the case is still pending.

Partners focus on collaborating with and building the capacity of local anti-trafficking taskforces

Partners in both Addis and Amhara continued to work with local anti-trafficking taskforces to address trafficking and promote safer migration within the local community. In Addis, BPDO provided awareness raising meetings to a sub-city taskforce to help improve understanding of safer migration. In Amhara, BPDO established two technical working groups in the towns where they are implementing activities. These working groups have developed operational plans for how to address gaps in anti-trafficking prevention efforts and promote safer migration. These working groups are comprised of members from local government offices and will assist the local anti-trafficking taskforces which have been identified as needing significant support. These working groups help promote local engagement and the sustainability of plans developed.

Other Amhara partners also noted engagement with anti-trafficking taskforces. EDA reported working with 17 local taskforces and was able to continue engaging them through covid-19 restrictions, although smaller meetings had to be held with a select number of members. Prior to the restrictions, PADet was able to provide training to 240 taskforce members.

Improving awareness about the cross-sections of mental health and migration

To assist in improving coordination between mental health professionals and those working with returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking, Agar provided a capacity building training for 36 stakeholders in collaboration with the local service provider Lebeza Psychiatry Clinic. The aim of the training was to improve awareness of mental health needs among returnee migrants, strengthen mental health services available, and bring together relevant stakeholders working on mental health issues. The training covered topics focused on the relationship between failed migration and mental health, common mental health needs of returnee migrant workers from the Middle East, psychological first aid, combatting mental health stigma, and community-based treatments for mental illness. Working with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, training was also provided on human trafficking and migration.

3. Hotspot Outputs & Outcomes

3.1 Headline Results

6,913 individuals participated in community freedom groups.

Despite not being able to meet in large groups for several months of 2020, the Ethiopia Hotspot partners managed to reach almost 7,000 individuals through various types of community freedom groups, including school groups, community conversation groups, and multi-sectoral groups. Implementing partner Netsebrak Reproductive Health and Social Development Organization (NRHSDO) reached just over 750 individuals through their community conversation groups. To ensure that group facilitators are equipped with the necessary skills, including methods to promote behaviour change and peer education management. Covid-19 preventative efforts were also included as part of the training to help prevent transmission of the virus in implementing groups. Over 2,000 school group members were reached to help promote awareness about the risks of migration and encourage students to stay in school. Prior to the outbreak of covid-19, implementing partner Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development (MSD) was able to reach over 400 female students and discussed safer migration and trafficking risks, as well as life skills such as assertiveness, self-confidence, decision making, and health-related information.

3,667 individuals provided with social and legal services

Implementing partners were able to deliver support services to community members, returnee survivors, and aspiring migrants. The services provided were based on the local organisations' expertise and skills as well as on the needs of the community. To promote the success of savings group members, NRHSDO provided training on financial literacy and business skills. They also worked in collaboration with local government officials to provide entrepreneurship training and invite special guests to help provide more information about economic opportunities. Furthermore, NRHSDO provided life-skills training and psychosocial support. Life skills training was aimed at assisting self-help group (SHG) members in having the personal skills to support effective business performance such as communication skills and decision making.

Working with recent returnees in Addis, Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society (Agar) provided a variety of support services, reaching almost 500 returnee migrant women and children. Based on the needs of the returnees, Agar provided shelter, individual, group, and family counselling, life-skills training, entrepreneurship training and occupational therapy techniques that included recreational activities such as handicrafts, dance, and other physical activities. Agar provided these services in-line with covid-19 guidelines as detailed by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

316 previously out-of-school children attending formal or non-formal education

Although partners did face some setbacks in achieving targets for educational services, due to covid-19 restrictions on group meetings, they were still able to support girls in accessing education. Addis-based partner the Organisation for the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS), was able to provide assistance to over 160 domestic workers working in Addis, including both women and children. These educational services are provided at a local school after school hours and are permitted based on OPRIFS negotiations with their employers.

490 individuals earn a new income or start a microenterprise

The covid-19 epidemic made it both challenging to implement some of the economic strengthening activities, but also all the more needed as many individuals faced challenges in being unable to work given the restrictions put in place. In Amhara, MSD creatively approached the issue by continuing to meet with self-help group members in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Later on in 2020, after restrictions had been lifted, MSD was able to reach over 400 individuals and help them start-up new businesses.

3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives

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

As for most across the globe, 2020 proved to be a challenging year for the Ethiopia Hotspot. Despite the challenges, including local partners who had to adjust project plans around a government-initiated state of emergency, returnee migrants who found themselves pushed out of employment and forced to quarantine in government-mandated centres upon arrival home, and aspiring migrant workers who had to endure unexpected changes to their plans to go abroad for work, it was inspiring to see the resiliency of both partners and local communities. The below captures progress that was made pre-covid, summarises creative adjustments made to continue implementing within safety measurements, and shows how some partners managed to continue to have an impact under shorter timeframes once restrictions were lifted.

Strengthening the capacity of group facilitators to deliver awareness raising.

Prior to and after covid-19 restrictions, partners were actively engaged with their community freedom group facilitators to strengthen their capacity to deliver a variety of awareness raising groups. In Amhara, implementing partner Beza Posterity Development Organization (BPDO), provided training to facilitators implementing community conversations and school groups. Integrating a participatory approach, the aim of the training was to provide a refresher to existing facilitators and update them on current migration trends and information. Similarly, Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) provided a refresher training to 24 community conversation facilitators to improve skills and provide updated information. They also provided training to 25 students and 10 school directors for the implementation of school groups. After the training was completed, they formed groups but were unfortunately unable to implement due to covid-19. Professional Alliance for Development (PADet) also provided facilitation training to 57 girls from local schools and 39 women for community conversation groups. They started to implement the groups and reached 608 individuals through community conversation groups and 377 students at targeted schools but had to discontinue the sessions due to covid-19 restrictions.

Raising awareness of local communities

Through the Ethiopia hotspot, a variety of awareness groups are implemented to target specific groups and provide information related to safer migration and the prevention of human trafficking and labour exploitation. In Addis, Bethsaida Restoration Development Association (BRDA), has raised awareness through iddirs, community events, school meetings and peer groups. Through these various activities, they were able to reach over 1,000 individuals. Mission for Community Development Program (MCDP), also based in Addis, took a slightly different approach and was able to reach 450 students through music and drama clubs that performed skits related to safer migration. Materials were also distributed. MCDP also implemented peer groups which not only focused on safer migration and anti-trafficking messages, but skills related to assertiveness, self-confidence, decision making, communication and health.

In Amhara, partners also implemented community outreach activities. Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development (MSD), reached almost 400 individuals through community conversation groups before they had to be suspended due to covid-19 restrictions. Although Netsebrak Reproductive Health & Social Development Organization (NRHSDO) faced similar challenges in implementing group activities, prior to the covid-19 restrictions, in addition to implementing awareness raising groups, they hosted a community-wide awareness event in collaboration with local kebele administrators, police, and representatives from the Women and Children's Affairs office.

OPRIFS continued their work in Addis and engaged returnees to share their experiences within local community groups. OPRIFS noted that they were able to reach many different community members including police officers, teachers, brokers, mothers, and local leaders. The total number of people reported as reached through these activities was 242. OPRIFS also continued to support local domestic workers and provided educational services to 192 women and girls. Their engagement with local domestic workers also included soft skills trainings to assist in employer engagement, including tools for effective communication and conflict management. These sessions also included safer migration messaging in case participants had an interest in pursuing work abroad.

Preventing school dropouts due to migration

To raise awareness of safer migration and prevent school drop-out in Addis, BRDA assisted 150 girls, that they identified as most at-risk of school dropout, to stay in school by providing scholastic materials, sanitary and hygiene materials, and providing information on safer migration. The awareness raising sessions were conducted in collaboration with social workers from the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs.

Programmatic adjustments made to respond to community needs

Given the challenges of implementing projects due to covid-19 and that the current hotspot phase was scheduled to end in December 2021, partners were permitted to submit proposals to adjust their project targets and budget and reflect the current realities on-the-ground. For OPRIFS, this meant adjusting project activities aimed at providing life-skills training and psychosocial support to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) to either those attending educational classes or residing in local shelters. They also adjusted a mass awareness-raising event on safer migration to be via radio instead of in-person. Although these changes did mean a readjustment to project targets, it allowed OPRIFS' work to reflect the realities on-the-ground and help promote the safety of project beneficiaries.

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

The economic challenges posed by covid-19 did not go unfelt by our implementing partners and local communities in Ethiopia. For partners focused on strengthening economic outcomes for returnee and aspiring migrant workers, they were unable to implement vocational training as planned or provide support to aspiring migrants whose plans were postponed given the limited travel and opportunities available. Despite these challenges, partners found ways to adjust activities, at times providing additional support and training to those who had lost local employment. Furthermore, some partners resumed vocational training once restrictions were lifted on group meetings, leading to progress against targets despite the challenges. Some of these challenges and successes are summarised below.

Self-help groups support local businesses

In Amhara, self-help groups (SHGs) continued to be a model used by local partners to help strengthen economic outcomes for women to help prevent unsafe migration practices. Through their SHGs, BPDO

assisted women to plan for managing and operating their own businesses. Similarly, NRHSDO was able to support over 100 women through loans provided by the SHGs in order to start microenterprises. Once covid-19 restrictions were in place, MSD continued to provide support to SHG members by meeting with them on a one-to-one basis. Outreach workers provided guidance on their businesses and emphasised the importance of savings given the challenges prompted by covid-19. Through support from MSD, 313 SHG members were able to continue their businesses or receive support from the group in order to launch new microenterprises. When restrictions were lifted, MSD provided support to over 400 women, helping them launch businesses through the provision of start-up capital.

Vocational training interrupted by covid-19 outbreak

Many partners were unable to implement vocational training activities as planned due to covid-19. BRDA began training 50 individuals in areas such as tailoring, hair dressing, leather work, and computer skills, but had to halt training once the pandemic hit. BRDA has been following-up with the trainees and are exploring options for them to complete their training.

Other partners were able to graduate individuals who had started their training last year and graduated in the first quarter of this year. NRHSDO had 47 women graduate from vocational training for domestic work. These individuals had started training last year and graduated in quarter one before covid-19 forced shut-down of most training. Unfortunately, given travel bans, these women will have to wait to find employment overseas. OPRIFS was also able to graduate nine individuals who had started vocational training last year. In addition to vocational training, these graduates received life skills training in order to protect them from unsafe migration practices and inspire them to work and support themselves via local market opportunities. PADet graduated 73 trainees who had started training in the previous year. These included trainees for both local employment and overseas employment as domestic workers.

For returnees who had previously received vocational training, but lost their job due to covid-19, Addis-based implementing partner MCDP helped these individuals establish new businesses to generate income. Working with a local government office, MCDP was able to assist returnees in accessing start-up capital and workspaces. Other participants were connected with a local bakery to deliver bread. MCDP also provided additional support via life-skills training, basic business skills and entrepreneurship development, and psychosocial support as needed. These support services were aimed at continuing to support returnees with their reintegration and psychological needs.

With restrictions on travel being lifted in the latter part of 2020, aspiring migrant workers became interested in pursuing work abroad. To help ensure that aspiring migrant domestic workers are equipped with the necessary skills, PADet worked with a local vocational training centre to provide training on domestic work overseas. Furthermore, PADet coordinated with a local Labour and Social Affairs office to help ensure they also received the necessary pre-departure orientation. Among the 75 graduates, 71 travelled to the Middle East by fulfilling all required legal procedures through a legally registered and recognised agency. Majority of the graduates were employed in Jordan and the UAE.

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

This year may have seen many local systems and government agencies efforts necessarily diverted to covid-19 response efforts. Although our partners did support these efforts through their existing relationships with government agencies and through support from the Freedom Fund's Emergency Relief Fund (ERF), they also

found ways to continue to improve local systems and structures to promote safer migration and help address labour exploitation. As detailed below, through collaboration and engagement with community-based structures and local government offices, key stakeholders were targeted such as religious leaders, transport workers, and local government officers.

Engagement of community-based organisations to promote systemic awareness raising

As part of their Freedom Fund project in Amhara, PADet specifically focused on building the capacity of community-based organisations. Through this project objective, PADet has provided trainings to religious leaders and leaders from iddir groups. The training was provided in collaboration with the Dessie Labour and Social Affairs office. The training provided has mainly focused on preventing human trafficking and promoting safer migration within their communities. Through these trainings, PADet reached 110 individuals, who will be able to share the information within their local communities.

Also in Amhara, implementing partner Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) provided training to religious leaders on safer migration and relevant anti-trafficking and migration laws within Ethiopia. The religious leaders established a religious forum that includes individuals from key religious institutions including Muslim, Orthodox, and Protestant. Once established, the forum also reached a consensus on how to ensure that the key messages covered in the training were provided to their constituencies.

Training provided to multi-sectoral stakeholders

Targeting key stakeholders in Amhara, EDA provided a two-day training on differences between safer and risky migration and relevant Ethiopian policies related to trafficking and migration. The training participants included prosecutors, civil experts, transport sector workers, and representatives from different local government offices. The training was provided in collaboration with experts on the topics from the Labour and Social Affairs office and the Justice Office. Post-training, participants developed an action plan to share information learned within their relevant networks.

4. Emergency Response Fund

Providing support to local communities in Ethiopia through the Emergency Relief Fund

Through Freedom Fund's covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund, all partners received at least two grants to implement projects focused on covid-relief efforts. Per the ERF guidelines, partners proposed and implemented a variety of activities to raise awareness about covid-19 and prevent its spread, provided PPE and hygiene materials to local community members to help protect local communities, distributed food to assist those financially struggling to meet basic needs, and provided support to returnee migrant workers.

Given Agar's experience in providing shelter and the needs of the many returnees, with the ERF support they established a shelter specifically for returnee migrant workers. The shelter was established as per the guidelines provided by the Ethiopia Ministry of Health and offered critical care for returnees as they healed from traumatic events, located family members, and transitioned back to life in Ethiopia. For those that needed additional support after receiving services at the temporary shelter, Agar was able to assist them in moving to their permanent Addis-shelter where they were able to receive more long-term support.

Launch of the Ethiopia Bete Reintegration Project

Building on Agar's framework to provide necessary support to returnee migrant workers, in November 2020, Freedom Fund launched a reintegration program for returnees from Lebanon. This program, which was called the "Ethiopia Bete Reintegration Project," was designed to respond to the increased number of Ethiopian female migrant workers requiring repatriation support from Lebanon. In many cases, the workers were not returning voluntarily, but were expelled by their employers due to economic instability exacerbated by the covid pandemic and the explosion in Beirut in August 2020.

Through this project, comprehensive medical, psychosocial and economic reintegration support is provided to female migrant workers repatriated from Lebanon. Returnees are offered support under one of two pathways; pathway 1 facilitates reintegration directly back to families and/or communities following a short stay at Agar's shelter, while pathway 2 offers residential shelter care to women with more complex medical or psychological needs.

The first repatriation of female migrant workers from Lebanon took place in December 2020. The Freedom Fund worked in collaboration with the Ethiopian consulate and a local partner in Lebanon (Arc en Ciel) to identify vulnerable migrant workers in need of support and coordinate their repatriation back to Ethiopia. This required exit visas facilitated by the Ethiopian embassy in Beirut and for all women to have negative covid tests prior to departure. The first cohort of 82 women arrived safely in Ethiopia on 10th December 2020 and were immediately taken to Agar's shelters in Addis Ababa. 7 women stayed at the shelter to receive comprehensive support services under pathway 2, and 77 women returned to their families and communities following an initial assessment, life skills training and individual/group counselling. The Ethiopia Bete Reintegration Project aims to repatriate and support a further 270 women in 2021.

Helping address the information gap on experiences of Ethiopian migrant workers in the Middle East

Through the ERF, a grant was also provided to Migrant-Rights.org to conduct research on the experience and status of migrant workers in Middle East countries from which the greatest number of Ethiopian workers were returning. Using their expertise on the Ethiopia-Gulf migration corridor and close monitoring through their network, Migrant-Rights.org sought to fill the information gap through a comprehensive report that provided

country-specific information on Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Although not a country from which there is a high number of returnees, a briefing on Bahrain was also included, given that the challenges faced by Ethiopia workers there are illustrative of the limited support services available and may provide relevant information for advocacy-related activities

The report submitted provided information on the experiences of Ethiopian migrant workers in the identified countries, detailed needs of workers and gaps in service provision, included immediate response needs and recommendations for long-term actions, and listed resources available for Ethiopian migrant workers in each location. The report also detailed statistics for each country, the impact that covid-19 is having, as well as detailed the local context, legal framework and complaint mechanisms available. The Ethiopia team is reviewing how to strategically use this report and is planning on releasing a blog through Freedom Fund's website. Additionally, the team has shared the report with local partners and is exploring how the findings reflected in the report can be used to strategically inform advocacy activities and outreach to Ethiopian migrant workers stranded in the Middle East.

5. Operations

New posts and recruitment for the growing Ethiopia office

As the Freedom Fund looks to implement new programs in Ethiopia in 2021, there was a pressing need to establish a larger team in-country. Within 2020, the Freedom Fund recruited for six additional posts in the Ethiopia office, including roles for programs, finance, and administrative support.

Preparations for Submission of Operational Agreement to the Government of Ethiopia

Given the Freedom Fund's growing portfolio of work in Ethiopia, we have decided to pursue an operational agreement with the government of Ethiopia. This will provide an overview of the portfolio over the next three years and aims at getting the government's buy-in for the FFE work in the years to come. The agreement should also help promote collaboration and ensure an amenable operating context.

6. Supporting a community of practice

Joint community of practice meeting held in Addis

In the beginning of 2020, the hotspot hosted a joint community of practice meeting where partners from both Addis and Amhara all met together. The meeting covered a variety of topics including a review of newly developed communication materials for promoting safer migration, an update from a technical assistance consultant on a vocational and livelihood monitoring tool, and presentations from Freedom Fund's Safeguarding Manager. On this latter agenda item, a high-level training was provided on safeguarding generally, as well as detailed how partners can better understand safeguarding concerns within their organisations. One action item coming out of the session was for partners to submit relevant policies they had related to safeguarding and for the Safeguarding Manager to review and provide feedback. Prior to the meeting, safeguarding site visits were conducted with a couple of partners to gain a better sense of what safeguarding issues partners may be facing and some of the challenges they may be up against in implementing robust safeguarding protocols.

Livelihoods and Vocational Training Monitoring

In February, technical assistance consultant Melkie Tilahun conducted site visits to ten implementing partners to better understand their systems for monitoring and provided follow-up to project participants engaged in vocational training and/or livelihood activities. Through hotspot assessments conducted in 2019, it was noted that to track and support successful outcomes, careful monitoring and provision of follow-up support of project participants was needed. To help support such efforts, Mr. Tilahun drafted reports of each partners' monitoring practices and developed a tool for better tracking and follow-up. The tool was presented to partners at the February all-partner meeting and was finalised with Freedom Fund head office staff in March. The tool has been distributed to partners to be used immediately.

Community of practice hosted on Zoom

Given the meeting restrictions in Ethiopia due to covid, partners had not been able to meet together for community of practice meetings after quarter one. To help address this gap, the hotspot team decided to test implementing the community of practice via Zoom. Zoom meetings were well attended, and connectivity issues were at a minimum. The community of practice element is central to the hotspot model and was especially important given that the current phase of the hotspot was winding down and ended in December 2020. To this point, a timeline for making project adjustments was reviewed to ensure that projects were able to be implemented reflective of the challenges of implementing in the pandemic-context. Additionally, as all partners participated in the ERF, the community of practice allowed for the space to review progress and answer questions that developed given the rapid nature of the ERF project cycle. The meetings were also recorded so partners could review in case of challenges with the internet. Another Zoom meeting was also hosted with the partner finance officers to discuss the budget revisions requested and to ensure compliance standards were being met.

7. Case study

Ami came to stay at Agar's shelter after attempting to go to Saudi Arabia for employment. In order to help provide for her family, Ami had moved around Ethiopia working different jobs, but wasn't satisfied with the pay received. When she returned home, she was pressured by her family to marry. Ami married per her family's request but found herself unhappy with the arrangement and soon divorced. She then worked with a local broker who informed her that she would be able to receive a higher income and support her family if she moved to Saudi Arabia.

Ami left her village without telling anyone where she was going. She travelled with a large group of other aspiring migrant workers as they journeyed through Somalia. When she arrived there, she had to undergo a mandatory medical exam before proceeding on her journey. At this point, she was informed that she was pregnant and could not continue on as planned. The broker informed her that she had two options: either pay an additional sum of money or stay in Somalia for a few months. After staying in Somalia for a few months she was taken to Saudi Arabia, where she stayed at a broker's home. The broker asked for additional money and Ami was forced to call her father to help her as she was unable to pay. Her father sold some of his farmland and sent the funds as requested. After two weeks living in the broker's house, police came and took all the waiting migrant workers to prison. Ami was in prison for about a month before being deported back to Ethiopia as she had not travelled to Saudi Arabia through a formal route.

Ami came to Agar after returning to Ethiopia. While staying at Agar, Ami gave birth to a healthy baby and received a variety of support from Agar including participating in individual and group counselling, life-skills training, health education, basic business skills training, and non-formal education. Ami has been in contact with her family and plans on returning home once she's ready to leave Agar.



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