



Photovoice



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Photovoice

There are some 67 million child brides on the planet today. The photographs that appear in this exhibition depict the world as viewed through the eyes – and camera lenses – of 10 such girls and young women in Ethiopia. All of them participated in an innovative program for child brides known as TESFA, which stands for Toward Economic and Sexual/Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls. The three-year long program, which reached more than 5,000 young married adolescent girls in the country's Amhara region, concluded in September 2013.

Implemented by CARE Ethiopia, evaluated by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and funded by the Nike Foundation, TESFA gave these extremely marginalized girls unprecedented opportunities to learn important information about their health and their economic opportunities, to interact with their peers, and to participate in the social, economic and political life of their families and communities.

Child brides are among the most vulnerable people in the world. They are typically less educated than their unmarried peers. They tend to live in the poorest households. They are socially isolated and overburdened with domestic responsibilities. They have been forced into sexual relationships early, and as a result, frequently have started childbearing before they are physically or mentally ready. In fact, childbirth is the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19 in the developing world. Married girls are also more likely to suffer from violence, and their children are more likely to die in infancy.

ICRW, in collaboration with CARE Ethiopia, used a research technique known as Photovoice to give some of the TESFA participants the chance to take an active role in the program evaluation. The girls were trained in the mechanics and ethics of photography, and over the course of five days in April 2013, they used donated digital cameras to visually document the impact the program had on their lives.

The photos taken by these 10 girls – whose names have been changed to protect their identities – are organized into five categories: education; burden of labor; gender roles; economic and social lives; and sexual and reproductive health. The photos paint a beautiful picture of the experiences the girls encountered during the course of the TESFA project, providing a rare and unique glimpse of their daily lives and challenges, their families, their relationships, their responsibilities and, importantly, their dreams.

BACK TO SCHOOL



This is me, I am studying at home after returning from school since I am attending to my education.”
— Genet

Once married, most girls in Ethiopia are forced to leave school to take on the burden of household chores and child rearing. The TESFA program reinforced the importance of education and as a result 80% of girls who had dropped out of school have aspirations of returning, and some already have, like Genet (left).



Only 12.7% of secondary school-aged girls in the Amhara region of Ethiopia actually attend school, while 45% of females between the ages of 15 and 49 have never been to school. TESFA Photovoice participant Meserech (left) also attends school and is pictured in her home while her sister helps out with childcare so she can study.

A WOMAN'S WORK



Young married girls and women are often burdened with caring for the household and children, leaving little room for other activities. TESFA Photovoice participant Fantash captures a woman sifting grain, one of the many chores for which they are responsible.



Here, Tigist catches a woman drying cow dung patties, which are used as cooking and heating fuel for the home.



This photograph shows how long we have to wait to have drinking water.”
— Meserech

Each jerrycan represents a woman, married girl or other child waiting their turn to fill up at the village well.



Young kids support their families in many ways in our communities.”
— Meserech

Here, Meserech captures two young children on their way to fetch water.



Yesalem (left) is shown grinding teff grain, from which the flatbread *injera* is made, with a large mortar and pestle, while simultaneously caring for her baby. It represents the heavy workload that married women and girls take on.



“She is providing appropriate care for her child as she has learned from TESFA.”

— Desta

Desta takes a photo of a fellow TESFA Photovoice participant while she breastfeeds.

SHIFTING GENDER ROLES, SHARED BENEFIT



One of the most significant outcomes of the program was the shifting of gender roles and sharing the burden of labor. **Yesalem** documents her husband (left) washing his feet, a practice that became a symbol of equality for those who participated in TESFA. Before the program, wives were expected to wash their husbands' feet when they returned from the field. However, after discussions on gender roles and the division of labor, many husbands began to help with household chores and child rearing, while wives like **Yesalem** gladly began helping with farming. As a result, husbands – and wives – now wash their own feet because both pairs get equally dirty in the fields.



“ These are my neighbors, they are husband and wife, and when I saw them helping each other I took the picture because I want to do the same with my husband.”

— Fantash

Fantash captures a man and woman carrying a plow to the fields.



“ This is my husband helping me bake injera. Every week when I baked injera, he would also bake one to learn how to do it and he is proud of doing it.”

— Zewdye

Gender roles started to become more equitable after TESFA began, with men helping with cooking, cleaning and child care, while their young wives began participating in selling goods, as well as farming. This shift in gender roles became a source of pride for both men and women; many are now comfortable and confident enough to carry out chores that were once considered taboo.



“ This is my husband making a basket, considered to be only a job for women before.”

— Desta

Desta describes what this photograph of her husband weaving a basket means to her: “We have changed because of the education we got from TESFA, there is no division of labor based on gender. I took this picture to show what my husband is doing....I feel very happy when I see this picture.”



“This is my neighbor, he has twins and is taking care of his kids.”

— Yesalem

Yesalem gets another great shot (left). She explains: “This is my neighbor, he has twins and is taking care of his kids....This was not common for men earlier but he learned from us. Since his wife is sick he is taking care of the children. I have never seen him doing this before.”



“My husband can now feed my baby daughter when I’m not around.”

— Zewdye

Zewdye photographs her husband feeding their child.



Fantash captures her husband collecting water, traditionally a woman’s role.



This is my mother-in-law taking care of my baby....Previously she never helped me but now our relationship has changed and she is helping me. I told her about the lessons I got from TESFA as well... and she became willing to help me."

— Serkalem

Other relationships have become more equitable as a result of TESFA, with different family members sharing the burden of child care, freeing wives up to be more productive in other areas. Serkalem photographs what this shift looks like in her own household.



Serkalem (left) is proud to be hard at work tending to the fields, traditionally a role reserved for men only.



Like Serkalem, Zewdye has begun taking on farming duties and is seen here plowing the family plot of land.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL ENHANCEMENT



Economic empowerment was an important component of the TESFA program. Participants learned about money management and were given support to start their own income generating activities. The girls formed savings and loans groups that helped them better provide for their families, invest their savings into their new income generating activities, obtain funds for emergencies and save for future ones. Desta captured her savings and loans group in action, lending money to one of its members. When asked how the photo made her feel, she said: "I am happy."



"I feel happy because I have been able to increase my income and I also feel happy because I'm now able to participate in such activities [that were out of reach before]. I will put my income in savings and use it to buy school materials and household items."

— Genet

Here, Genet is shown cultivating a small plot of land in her yard.



Girls taking part in the TESFA program were taught basic income generating skills and encouraged to start their own activities. Photovoice participant Habtam (left) has helped a friend plant a banana-like tree in order to sell fruit.



One result of early marriage is a lack of mobility and social isolation; many girls are not allowed to leave their home, interact with friends, attend meetings or go to the market. Throughout the program, participants met every other week in groups of their peers; one of the most surprising outcomes from TESFA was the strong friendships and support networks that each of the girls developed. Left, Dasashe captures one of her new friends helping to care for her child.



“ This is our savings and loan group. I am happy to be with them....Previously I had never been part of a group like this and I did not have friends. I am very happy now.”
— Dasashe

Dasashe takes a group shot of her new friends.



Desta is pictured here heading to the market to sell goods. Before TESFA, only 55% of the participants said they were able travel to a market unaccompanied by another household member. According to end of project data, this has increased to 65%. As a result, several more girls have been able to take leadership roles in their savings groups or in their communities.

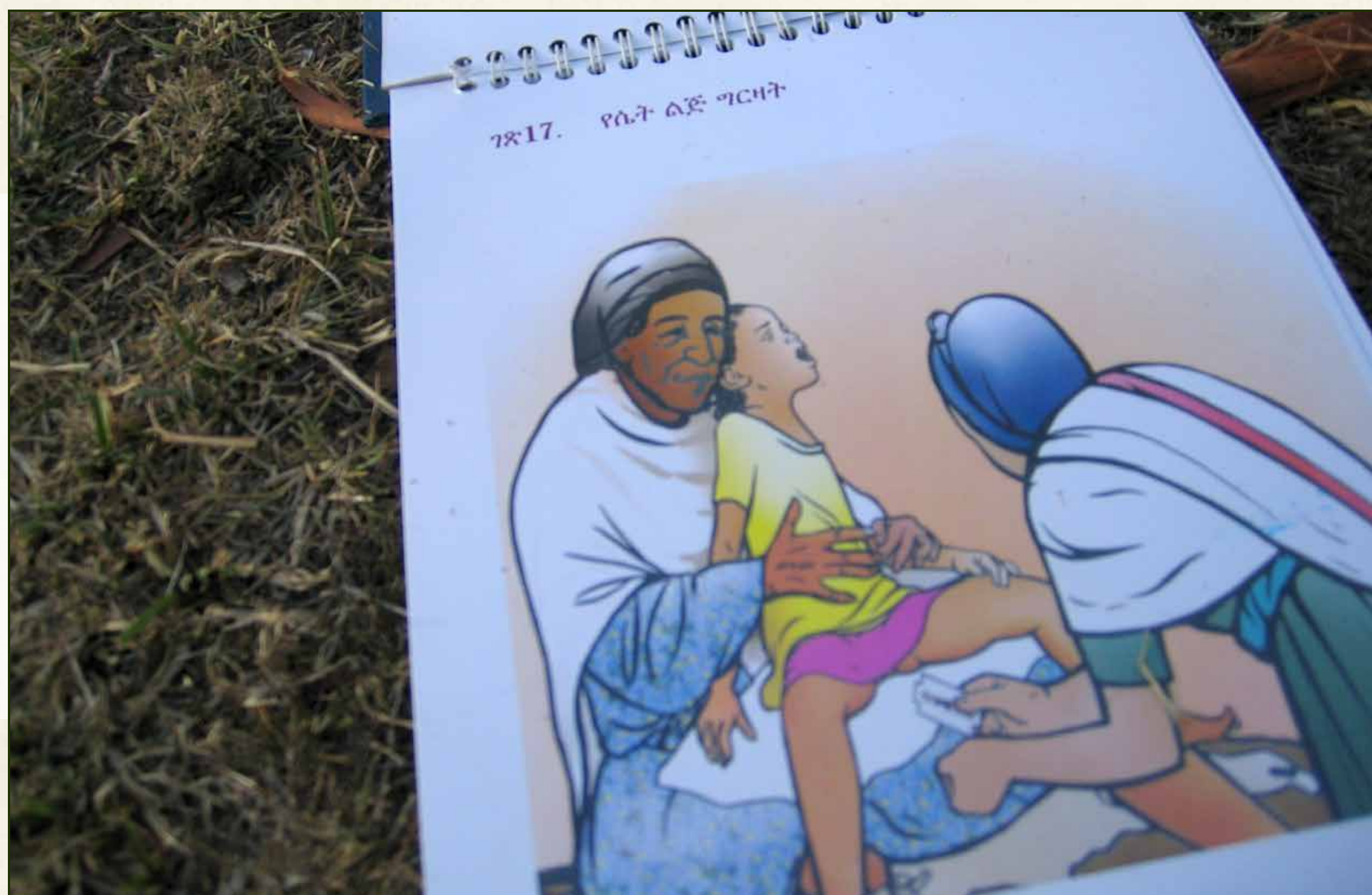
HER HEALTH, HER BODY



“ This is me getting a contraceptive injection....I have one child and I want to wait until my child becomes strong enough [before I have another].”

— Yesalem

Before TESFA, discussions about contraceptives were not common. One of the main goals of the program was to raise awareness of the benefits they could provide the girls and their families. Use of contraception increased in project intervention areas from 42% to 62%.



According to a 2013 UNICEF report, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) prevalence rate in Ethiopia is 74%. Left, Meserech captured an image of a poster used in a TESFA session for participants and community members about the impacts of the harmful traditional practice. By the end of the project, 23% of participants said that they would let their daughters be cut, a drop from 38% at the start of the program.



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