

Community Engagement to Eliminate Bride Price, Bride Abduction and Early Marriage in Ethiopia

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Healthy Unions community engagement and behavioral change is a project to eliminate bride price bride abduction and early marriage in Ethiopia; one of the projects that CARE Ethiopia is implementing, to promote the right and protection of girls and women in Borana zone, in Yabello, Dire and Arrero districts. The areas are selected based on the prevalence of bride abduction, bride price and early marriage and many more harmful traditional practices predisposing to fear of HIV/AIDS pandemic diseases. The project promotes gender equality and women and girls empowerment as a pillar in achieving one of the Millennium Development Goals through prevention, promotion awareness campaign against HTP, by passing information and education to promote changes in community norms/attitude knowledge.

Healthy Union's project is also good to explore the abundant cultural practice of the Borana pastoralist community norms and practice to bring desired behavioral change and protect women from gender based violence, abduction price and early marriage. In order to achieve this goal this project is working closely with women, girls and men in partnership and youth –centered programs at school to raise awareness that is already started with school community teachers and parents equipped with crucial information regarding the project.

Domestic violence is another stigmatizing condition, and yet no women report domestic violence injuries because it is taken as a shame, as violence is defined as some thing that occurs only between men never man and his wife or, parent and children. It is an acceptable method of maintaining order with in the household. As a result:

- Girls who get pregnant before- marriage are highly discriminated and socially out

casted, and are consequently exposed to several problems.

- Female genital circumcision is widely practiced still as information gathered during survey in Muslim, Christian and Wakefata community.
- Early marriage is reported from every corner of Borana; the old man can marry a little girl if he can afford bride price.
- Disabled women suffer more in many cases; they cannot find husband and often men take advantage of them sexually.

The *Healthy Unions* project emphasized on the importance of community conversation facilitators or women peer groups to disseminating information. Mostly, it attempts to mobilize pastoral women and girls' education as it has a challenge for the men fear that such activities will expose their women to city life and accusation to seek justice.

Story of Qaballe Dida Ali



"Now I am free & feel comfortable. I will continue my school and I want to be a Doctor in the future."

Qaballe Dida is 10 years old and a 4th Grade student. Unfortunately, a 34 years old young-man happened to be attracted by her families already made a deal with the Groom's family for the bride price and the desire to

create relationship with rich family.

However, Qaballe refused the proposed early marriage. She argued with her family and hidden herself at her older sister's house. Her sister herself married at early age and she considers her case to help Qaballe but she did not know how to help and where to go. By chance trained peer educators informed her to apply to women affairs to cancel the illegal but culturally accepted marriage by the community. Immediately, she wrote a letter to women affairs office, and in response to Quballe's letter, the Zonal Women Affairs and district offices with Healthy Unions project staffs traveled to stop and save the little girl from early marriage. After much discussion, the way forward was to handle it through negotiation instead of taking legal action based on Ethiopian and Oromia Regional State's Family law. Negotiation was made with community leaders and both families reached general agreement.

Qaballe attended Peer Educators session while her mother attended the community conversation. Finally, the community started to know that it was the right and logical thing to do and it really showed that the community is a change maker, if the work is closely done with development programs.

W/r Sake Wako and Ato Mengistu Itticha from the Zonal Women Affairs who devoted their energy ,skills, and time to save Qaballe Dida from early marriage said that peer trained young educators should be encouraged more to provide accurate technical information regarding harmful traditional practice.

By the effort of the community volunteers, especially peer educators, Qaballe Dida was saved and survived from early marriage. Now she hopes that she will enjoy school. "Now I am free & feel comfortable, I will continue my school and I want to be a doctor in the future." She remarked.

This was a story of a single girl but which shows that of the myriads of girls at risk and also the young generation's increasing battle against HTP.

Current Preferred Terminologies Usages on HIV & AIDS

Old usage	Current preferred usage
Commercial sex work	Sex work <i>or</i> commercial sex, <i>or</i> the sale of sexual services*
Developing countries	Low and middle income countries
Direct sex workers	Brothel-based sex workers or formal sex workers
Indirect sex workers	Non-brothel-based sex workers or informal sex workers
Fight against AIDS	Response to AIDS
High(er) risk groups	Key populations at higher risk*
HIV/AIDS	HIV unless specifically referring to AIDS
HIV/AIDS	AIDS diagnosis; HIV-related disease
HIV/AIDS epidemic	AIDS epidemic or HIV epidemic
HIV/AIDS prevalence	HIV prevalence
HIV/AIDS prevention	HIV prevention
HIV/AIDS testing	HIV testing
People living with HIV/AIDS	People living with HIV*
Prostitute	Sex worker
Prostitution	Term to use in respect to juvenile prostitution, otherwise use sex work
Intravenous drug user	Injecting drug user*
Most vulnerable to infection	Most likely to be exposed to HIV (unless specifically referring to vulnerability)
Prevalence rates	Prevalence
Risky sex	Unprotected sex
Sharing (needles, syringes, etc.)	Using contaminated injecting equipment (if referring to HIV transmission)
Sharing (needles, syringes, etc.)	Using non-sterile injecting equipment (if referring to risk of exposure to HIV)
Vulnerable groups	Vulnerable populations or populations most likely to be exposed to HIV <i>or</i> populations at higher risk of exposure

Source: UNAIDS