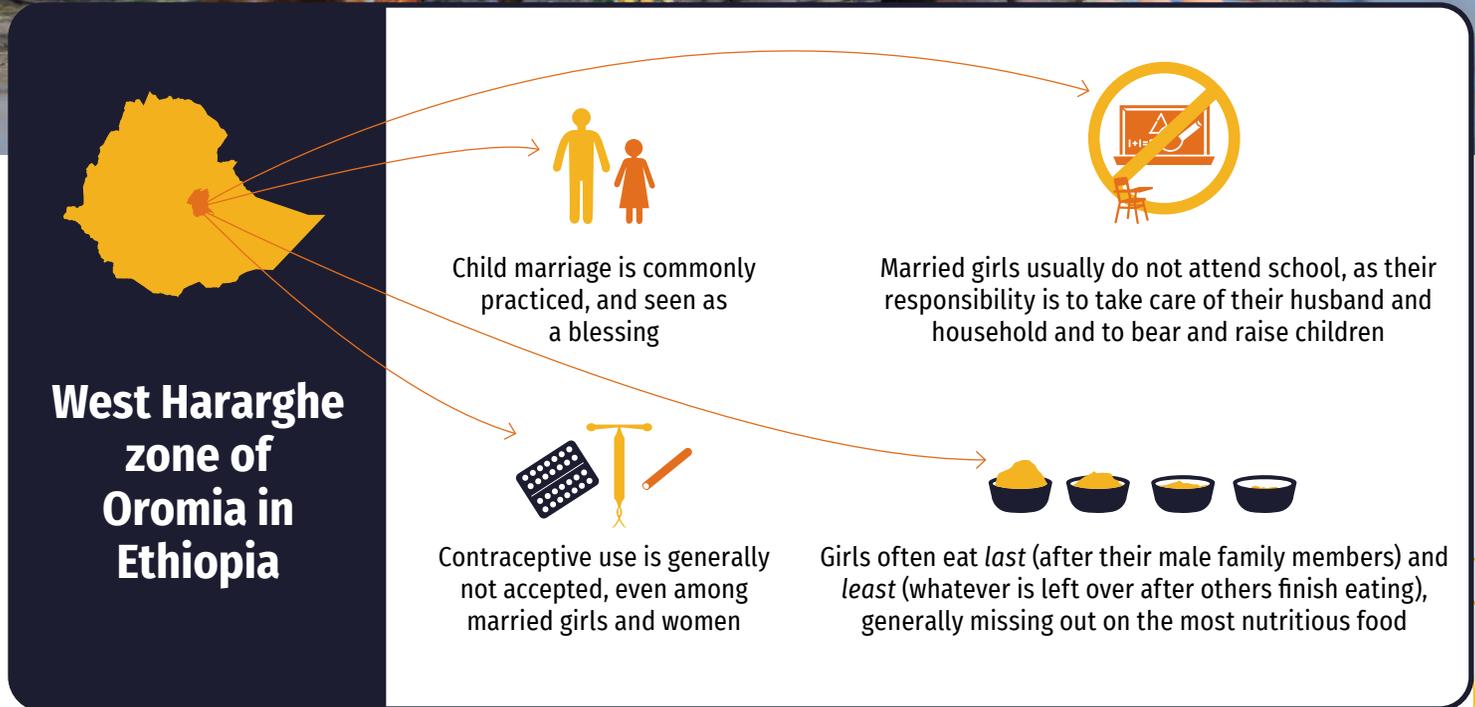


Lessons learned from CARE's Abdiboru programme



Programme Goal

Advance gender equality and girls' empowerment by reducing rates of early and forced marriage and improving health and nutritional outcomes among adolescent girls

PARTICIPANTS



Young adolescent girls (age 10-14, at the start of the programme, married or unmarried), adult stakeholders (including relatives of the girls, representatives from local governments, service providers, teachers, and community leaders)

ACTIVITIES



Individual

Girls formed Village Savings and Loan Associations (VLSAs), which allowed them to save money together while also learning about sexual and reproductive health and nutrition and building relevant life skills including communication and negotiation.



Government

Using CARE's Community Score Card® approach, key government stakeholders and service providers worked together to identify and solve structural challenges restricting girls' access to critical health and educational services.

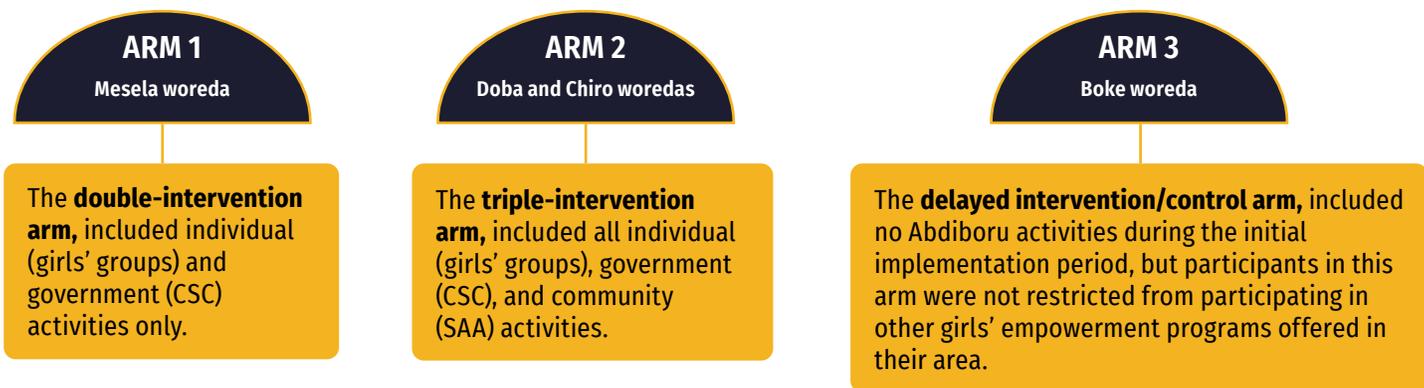


Community

Various influential community members formed groups and used CARE's Social Analysis and Action (SAA) tool to raise, reflect on, and devise plans to address biases and discriminatory norms undermining girls' empowerment, health, and development.

EVALUATION

CARE worked with the Addis Continental Institute of Public Health (ACIPH) to evaluate the Abdiboru programme. Researchers took a quasi-experimental approach, dividing participants into three different study arms by location (woreda).



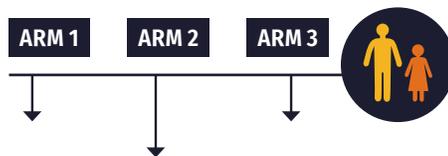
With this evaluation design, we sought to explore how well the programme achieved its overall goals, and which intervention arm was the most effective at realizing positive change.

Abdiboru Evaluation Findings

Early marriage

- The early marriage rate declined in all three arms, but the largest decline (**44.1%**) was seen in the triple-intervention arm.
- Adolescent girls' control over whether or not to marry, who to marry, and when to marry also significantly increased over the life of the programme.

Early Marriage Declined



Education

- School continuation after marriage improved significantly, with almost half of married girls reporting they could stay in school after marriage at the end of the programme (compared to around 20% at the beginning).
- Girls who felt their school was "very supportive of girls' needs" also increased significantly, from **39.1%** at baseline to **49.8%** at end-line.

Sexual and reproductive health

- Contraceptive use among sexually active adolescent girls increased from **34.8%** to **41.2%** in the triple-intervention arm (use declined in other arms).
- Rates of sexual activity among girls declined in all three arms, but the largest decline (from **18.3%** to **9.8%**) was seen in the triple-intervention arm.

Sexual activity among girls
DECLINED
in all three arms

Girls Eating at same time as Boys Increased

25.4% to **54.9%**



Nutrition and food allocation

- Gender-based discrimination in household food allocation and timing of meals decreased in Abdiboru programme areas.
- Adolescent girls who reported eating the same type of food as boys significantly increased in the triple-intervention arm from **24.6%** to **74.9%**.
- Girls who reported eating meals at the same time as boys also increased from **25.4%** to **54.9%** (also in the triple-intervention arm).

Life skills

- Over the life of Abdiboru, girls' aspirations broadened (with marriage no longer being the ultimate goal), and their confidence increased.
- A majority of girls (**more than 80%**) reported high confidence in their own negotiation skills after participating in the programme.



Evaluation findings indicate that Abdiboru contributed to a reduction in child marriage and helped to shift social norms to be more supportive of girls' health, empowerment, and overall wellbeing. The triple-intervention arm achieved the most significant results, demonstrating the importance of engaging with the broader community and stakeholders to create an enabling environment for girls to thrive.