

“Yene-Raey”

Advancing Children’s Wellbeing and Gender Equality of Adolescent Girls Through Integrated Program Approach

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Introduction

Young people constitute one-third of the total population in Ethiopia, and especially girls and young women are the one who suffer from different harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and gender based violence and other taboos that holds them back from exercising their rights. High dropout rates of girls especially in secondary education correspond directly with age of marriage, suggesting that once married, adolescents abandon education in favor of domestic duties. This not only limits their social and economic opportunities in future, but it also has substantial negative influences for their SRHR¹. Harmful practices are deep-rooted traditions in many communities, perpetuated by poverty, lack of education and economic opportunities, and social customs limiting rights of women and girls. These are further complicated by limited access to SRH information, and the poor quality of adolescent and youth friendly SRH information and services. Although there are relatively well-developed legal and policy frameworks addressing HTPs, the problem is lack of due attention and commitment to their full implementation and coordination among different stakeholders. The National Adolescent and Youth Reproductive Health Strategy addresses teenage pregnancy, gender based violence and child marriage. It has been distributed across the country, but it is not prepared to support grass root level implementation, which has limited its scope.

This project seeks to transform the underlying social norms that contribute to harmful practices and empower adolescents to realize their rights to SRH related information, advice and services. Following Plan International’s innovative Champions of Change model, the girls and boys will take an active role in challenging the status quo in their communities, through intergenerational dialogues, peer-to peer-support, awareness rising, and engaging in local level advocacy together with, and as a part of civil society, leading a social movement for girls. In order to shift power relations and change norms in a sustainable way the project will work closely with families, traditional and religious leaders and a whole community for the fulfillment of SRHR of young people. Communities’ awareness on gender equality and the rights of their children will be strengthened, and a strong focus will be on changing attitudes and behaviors where these are detrimental to SRHR. The project will work with civil society, strengthening it by building capacities and uniting different actors to advance SRHR in communities and engage in advocacy to influence policy and practice at regional, woreda and kebele levels. Duty bearers will be supported to fulfill their obligations and improve the adolescent friendly SRH service provision.

The project will be implemented in southern regional states together, zonal and woreda government structures that are having a long experience in working those areas and communities, and partnership with Plan International Ethiopia. The highest estimate of its prevalence is in southern region. In the regions, school attendance is low compared to the enrolment rates. This indicates that after the enrolment children – especially girls – face a number of problems in relation to different harmful practices like child marriage, child labor, and abduction/rape and due to these factors, the attendance in school is much lower than the enrolment rate indicated.

¹ SRHR- Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights