

URBAN LIVELIHOODS IMPROVEMENT FOR ADULT WOMEN: ADDRESSING VULNERABILITY AND MEASURING OUTCOMES OF CSOS INTERVENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to identify urban livelihoods of adult women living in two sub-cities of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and measure the level of outcomes of interventions made by CSOs in quantitative terms. 86 women that benefited from the projects were randomly selected to provide data through questionnaire, while some of the women and project employees were interviewed. Frequencies and percentages were employed as analysis techniques. Findings indicated that the women used to suffer from a number of vulnerability contexts which sought diversified intervention strategies most of which led to improvement in the living standards of the women. Access to market and inability to manage finance remain continued challenges calling for solutions. The study recommends the importance of linking job creation efforts through self-employment with micro credit schemes and market access.

Keywords: Livelihoods, Interventions, Poverty, Development, CSOs

INTRODUCTION

Background and Problem Statement

Ethiopia is a Federal Democratic Republic with nine regional states and two city administrations. It is the second most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa with a population currently estimated to over 100 million. About 85% of the population lives in rural areas engaged in subsistence agriculture while nearly 15% are urban dwellers. Ethiopia has favorable economic opportunities and prospects for its development owing to its ownership of trainable labor force, abundant natural resources, and strong policy environment (AfDP, 2015).

The Government of Ethiopia had made progressive steps towards achieving gender equality and ensuring empowerment of women, development of maternal health and environmental sustainability through increased investments in priority sectors like agriculture, health, education, etc. over the past three decades. The country also had a good record of development achievement. For example, it was reported that there was significant decline in the percentage of population living in poverty over the years. According to some official source, there was a decline of poverty by 38.8% over 16 years and poverty index which stood at 29.6 in 20010/11 declined to 27.8% in 2011/12. The decline was much higher for rural areas than urban with 30.4% and 25.7% respectively (FDRE, 2016). Its human development index also rose from 0.250 in the year 2000 to 0.363 in 2011 (MoFAF, 2016).

The country continued to register remarkable economic growth rate averaged at 10.8 since 2004 and the GDP growth was reported to have raised about 20 million citizens over the poverty line which facilitated the achievement of targets of the Millennium Development

Goals that came to an end in 2015. Despite the marked reduction in the country's poverty levels, an estimated 23 million of the population still continued to live below poverty line (AfDP, 2015).

The continued persistence of poverty indicates that the sole effort of the government does not make much change unless supplemented by other stakeholders. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) form part of the development partners and many have been operational in different parts of the country including Addis Ababa City. Although various CSOs have been involved in assisting the urban poor especially women to overcome their livelihoods problems, so far, few studies documented the contribution made towards women's livelihoods improvement in Addis Ababa. Among the existing studies on livelihoods improvement, Schmid, (2010) studied the livelihood conditions of street dwellers in Addis Ababa by drawing sample from street dwellers and employees of the CSOs. This study was confined on livelihoods but could not make distinction between men and women. Mekibib (2016) investigated the role of self-help groups in Lideta and Kirkos sub-cities in Addis Ababa and came up with findings that showed the improvement of livelihood assets of the beneficiaries through building vocational skills, creating access to finance, and strengthening their social networks. Mekibib's study was limited to Lideta and Kirkos sub-cities and focused on Self-Help Groups than studying the role of CSOs. Alemtsehay (2016) conducted study on the role of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) on women entrepreneurs in urban locality of Addis Ababa with reference to Woreda 8 in Yeka sub-city. Her findings suggested that MSEs have played their positive role in women livelihoods by creating employment opportunities for job seekers that have low starting capital to engage in self-employment. Alemtsehay's study was conducted in one of the current study areas (Yeka), but it was not comprehensive for it focused on only one Woreda (District). It also focused on educated women who can receive Technical Vocational Education and Training to the neglect of illiterate or less educated women. Furthermore, the study was directed to Micro and Small Enterprises than on the contribution of CSOs to women's development. We don't have knowledge about the role of CSOs in relieving women from social and economic burdens in Bole and Yeka sub-cities. Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the interventions made by three CSOs, namely Dorcas AID, Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization, and Bring Love in for Needy Children to support destitute women living in Bole and Yeka sub-cities of Addis Ababa. The study raised the following research questions to guide the whole process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Research Questions

1. What were the livelihoods situations of the urban women before the intervention?
2. In what ways were the women supported to come out of their situations?
3. How, and to what extent did the livelihoods change after the projects?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Livelihoods

Everywhere in the world most women experience a number of challenges that include poverty, inequality, low education level, lack of income, limited access to social and economic services, etc. Such situations force the poverty stricken women to look for alternative means of overcoming these challenges (Zezza, et. al, 2009). The likely solution to these challenges lies in the possibility of women getting access to building assets. Livelihoods improvement contributes to poverty reduction by helping women generate income, participate in capacity building training, organizing in self-help groups, make decisions on their personal and/or family lives.

Livelihoods are defined by UNHCR as activities that allow people to secure basic necessities of life including food, shelter and clothing. Women's engagement in livelihoods improvement indicates the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experiences and resources to help meet individual and collective needs. Involving in livelihoods activities would assist the concerned women come out of their vulnerability context and gain financial, social, and physical capital needed to become self-reliant, live with dignity and work productively in their communities so as to shape their future (UNHCR, 2014).

Livelihoods, according to IASC (2006), comprises of capabilities, assets and strategies that people use to achieve food and income securities through different activities including non-formal education, vocational skills training programs, income generation, saving and credits, starting new business, self-and paid employment activities.

Deprivation of a person from food, shelter, clothing, education, good health, self-respect, social well-being, social inclusion, etc., results in vulnerability in addition to being indicator of poverty (Dhakal, 2002). Whether or not poverty is caused by individual's inability, or due to environmental influence it remains unanswered for some time in the future. Currently, however, addressing the issue goes beyond the capacity of individuals and becomes challenges to development agencies such as the government and Civil Society Organizations.

The term vulnerability is sometimes equated with poverty and described in many different ways for it has several dimensions including, social, political and economic aspects. Miller and Rein (1970) described poverty as having political, legal and educational components. For them, deprivation of a person from his/her human rights even in the abundance of income to live on, is a kind of poverty that lies in the political domain. Flora and Thiboumery (2005) contend that attention to all forms of community capital, that is, political, economic, human, cultural, natural, financial and built capital is important to reduce poverty by using social capital as entry point. Robert (1983), for example, calls poverty as 'deprivation trap' which includes such categories as weak and poor household, isolated, vulnerable and a powerless household. Rowntree (1901) conceptualized poverty as having primary and secondary levels. For him, primary poverty is the situation whereby a person fails to meet such basic needs as food, shelter and warmth because of low income level. Secondary poverty is where a household fails to buy minimum subsistence needs because of poor utilization of available income, however low or high it may be. According to Lipton (1983), households spending more than 70% of their expenditure on food items alone are said to be poor. Others distinguish households to be poor if they fail to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing,

Policy Environments Relating to Development and Women in Ethiopia

The Government of Ethiopia adopted series of policies, plans and programs that put women at the center of development priorities over different periods. These policies have the potential for addressing inequality and promoting women empowerment. The 1995 Constitution addresses issues of women equality and empowerment. In addition, the national policy on Ethiopian women aims at ensuring conducive environment for women participation in decision making. Other policies such as the education and training policy, health policy, and the development and social welfare policy all address issues of women. The various plan documents on development issued at different times also show Ethiopian Government's commitment and priorities relating to women empowerment. In 2002, a five-year plan called 'Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program' showed the government's

commitment to four development pillars: a) Agricultural Development Led Industrialization, b) governance, empowerment and decentralization, c) justice system and civil service reform and d) capacity building (MoFED, 2002). The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) addresses poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment (MoFED, 2006). The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), sets targets that aim at increasing women's entrepreneurial skills, training, credit and saving services, Protection of women against violence, and participation of women in decision-making processes (MoFED, 2010).

Moreover, the government of Ethiopia, beyond issuing policies and putting relevant structure (e. g. Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) in place, has also made particular focus on budget allocation for pro-poor sectors such as education, health, water, agriculture, etc., with the hope that investment in these areas would lead to loosening burden of women and facilitate their access to the productive resources (FDRE, 2016).

Despite the availability of such policy frameworks and practices relating to women empowerment and efforts made by the government to reduce the level of poverty, women still face several challenges like limited access to productive assets such as credit, financial management skills, and modern technology resources, time poverty due to women's engagement in domestic chores and workplace related tasks as well as limited opportunities for gainful employment.

Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia: Emergence and Role in Development

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can be studied from traditional and modern points of view. Traditionally, practices like “*equb*” “*idir*”, “*debo*”, “*wenfel*”, “*hirpha*,” and other means of supporting each other existed among the Ethiopian urban and rural communities from early days up to the present without receiving any modern name as civil society organization. *Equb* is a voluntary organization where by members periodically contribute their money and give it to one member at a time to help solve his/her financial problems. ‘*Idir*’ is a kind of voluntary organization where members support each other by pooling their labor as well as limited amount of money to solve social problems faced by a member by the time he/she loses a family member by death. *Idir* and *equb* according to (Mackie, et. al, 2015) serve as informal finance providers. *Debo* is a kind of labor contribution for free, to any community member in situations that go beyond the person's financial or labor capacity. *Hirpha* is similar to *debo*, but differs in that it is a kind of financial and/or material contribution collected from community members and given to a person who lost his/her money or property through manmade or natural conditions. ‘*Wenfel*’ is a labor relationship where members support each other by exchanging labor in reciprocity. According to Belay and Dagne (2015), ‘*Mahber*’ and “*Senbete*” serve religious needs of members of the association.

The emergence of modern civil society organizations in Ethiopia dates back to 1930, few years before the Italian invasion of 1935 (Belay & Dagne, 2015). Their operation was disrupted by the war and there was no service during the occupation period. Prior to this, modern CSOs had their roots in the northern part of country with the coming Ethiopia of the Jesuit Missionaries. The missionaries had the purpose of disseminating religious teaching among members of Catholic Christianity. As a means of disseminating the religion, they taught reading and writing to help members read and understand the Holy Bible. The Missionaries were also credited for their attempt to introduce elements of modern education to Ethiopia. However, due to strong resistance from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the government gave deaf ear to their requests until the official opening of Menelik II School in

1908. Following the restoration of the Imperial Power in 1941, Legal Notice No59/1944 was issued to Officially encourage missionaries establish and run hospitals and schools of their own to support government's effort at expanding modern economic sectors.

METHOD

To find answers to the research questions, a descriptive survey was conducted with women living in Bole and Yeka sub-cities of Addis Ababa who were beneficiaries of development intervention made by CSOs operating in the area. 86 women household heads were randomly selected and made to supply data through questionnaire. One-on one interview was conducted with some of these women and project employees. The collected numerical data were organized in the form of tables and analyzed using frequency and percentage. Interview data were analyzed using narrative descriptions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. Vulnerability context of the urban women

Type of vulnerability	No. of affected women	%
Commercial Sex work	21	24.4
Forced marriage	2	2.3
Loss of husband	24	27.9
Divorce	16	18.6
HIV/AIDS	33	38.4
Poor health	48	55.8
Illiteracy	37	43.0
Unemployment	73	84.8
Lack of productive asset	68	79.1
Food insecurity	49	57
Inability to send children to school	23	26.7
Poor housing	61	70.9

List of challenges faced by the women before they were supported by the projects were presented to the respondents. They were requested to think back on their life situations and indicate (with possibility of multiple responses) which of the listed challenges were influencing their lives. As can be observed from the table although the magnitude varies for persons all the listed variables had influence on lives of the surveyed women. Social vulnerability (commercial sex, forced marriage, loss of parents, divorce, HIV/AIDS, poor health and illiteracy) affected 27.9% of the women. Poor housing condition, poor health and HIV/AIDS are the most pressing social problems followed by loss of husband, commercial sex and divorce. Economic vulnerability (unemployment, lack of productive assets, food insecurity and inability to send children to school) is most common for 61.9 of them. Unemployment is the high ranking indicator of vulnerability followed by lack of productive asset (e.g. credit, startup capital) and food insecurity. While 43% of the surveyed women were illiterate themselves, nearly 40% were unable to send their children to schools. Failure to educate children would likely perpetuate the observed challenges in cyclic form acting on generation as a trap that prevents breaking out of the poverty circle. It can be concluded from

the data that the surveyed women were suffering from acute social and economic problems that affected their lives to the detriment of their dignity.

Selection criteria for participation in the projects were:

- i. Currently being unemployed
- ii. Having low or no educational achievement
- iii. Low social status
- iv. Low income
- v. Currently being self employed
- vi. Interest in vocational skills training
- vii. Plan to start small business
- viii. Plan to get paid employment when possible

Table 2. Interventions made by the CSOs

No.	Type of Intervention	Personal involvement	
		Yes f(%)	No f(%)
1	Awareness/Capacity building Training	86 (100)	0 (0.00)
2	Vocational Skills Training	27 (31.4)	59 (68.6)
3	Adult Literacy classes	34 (39.5)	52 (60.5)
4	Self-Help Group formation	32 (37.2)	54 (62.8)
5	Revolving fund provision	64 (74.4)	22 (25.6)
6	Job creation service	72 (83.7)	14 (16.3)
7	Entrepreneurship training	25 (29.1)	61 (70.9)

The projects run by the CSOs were diversified in such a way that they included awareness creation and capacity building training, vocational skills training, running adult literacy classes to help the women develop reading and writing skills, helping the women organize into self-help groups, provision of revolving fund, advice and assistance on how to create jobs and entrepreneurship training. All the women beneficiaries were involved in awareness creation and capacity building training. Over 83% were supported on how to create their own jobs. Job creation had life skills components such as knowledge of business concepts, business plan preparation, marketing management, business growth and extension, customer handling, and networking skills. The types of business included poultry production, petty trading, micro and small business, baking and selling Injera (local bread made from teff flour). Some others got employed for private business firms as cleaners, cashiers, waitress, childcare providers, etc. 64 persons were granted revolving fund that might help them start their own business. More than one-fourth of the women were involved in vocational skills training. Close to 40% were involved in adult literacy activities. Literacy education best fits to those who are unable to read, write and do simple arithmetic, and hence excludes those who have these skills already acquired. Literacy education is said to make general contribution to asset enhancement and lays foundation for all other skills development that are transferable to work environment. Adult literacy programs are often held with the belief that the skills acquired through such activities would respond to the actual economic and social needs of the participants.

Despite the fact that diversified intervention strategies were implemented, well over 60% of the women did not participate in adult literacy (This is due to more level of education previously acquired), entrepreneurship training, formation of self-help groups as well as

vocational skills training. It can be concluded that the women had different needs that call for varied form of solutions or intervention mechanisms. Entrepreneurship training attracted only 25 women who had the interest and plan to create their own jobs after involving in the projects. The self-help group formation which involved 32 (37.2%) participants was planned to train women on how to create saving and credit management, book keeping and financial management as well as leadership skill and group management. A general conclusion that can be drawn from the low number of women participating in self-help group, and entrepreneurship training is that the activities are not appropriate for all women, but are more appealing for those who have the need and readiness to take up self-employment.

Moreover, interview with project employees showed that the vocational skills training focused on sewing and embroidery while business formation was given on petty trading producing peanut butter, etc. to help participants get self-employed as immediately as possible after completion. The business skills had the purpose of helping the participant engage in either self or paid employment.

The amount of credit available for the trained women was not enough to meet the demand of each woman. Entrepreneurship training focused on instructions in how to start business, the how of financial management, generation of business ideas, and market survey. Experience sharing through field visits to workplaces of successful previous women who took similar training and engaged in their own business was also part of the training.

Close observation and analysis of the activities covered by the interventions mentioned above show that the strategies aimed at reducing poverty situations of women need to link the realities of women’s lives and the livelihoods needs.

Table 3. Perceived Level of Service Effectiveness

S.N.	List of services	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low	Not at all
1.	Awareness raising and capacity building/ training services	51 (59.3%)	16 (18.6%)	15 (17.4%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2)
2.	Vocational education and training services (VETS)	26 (30.2%)	15 (17.4%)	4 (4.7%)	4 (4.7%)	10 (11.6%)	27 (31.4%)
3.	Provision of Revolving fund and services	38 (44.2%)	15 (17.4%)	11 (12.8%)	2 (2.3%)	8 (9.3%)	12 (14.0%)
4.	Business Development services (BDS)	45 (52.3%)	11 (12.8%)	12 (14.0%)	4 (4.7%)	6 (7.0%)	8 (9.3%)
5.	Self Help group formation and development services (SHG-FDS)	53 (61.6%)	13 (15.1%)	7 (8.1%)	1 (1.2%)	9 (10.5%)	3 (3.5%)

To know whether or not the interventions were effective from the side of the beneficiaries, the respondents were requested to label their perceived level of project service effectiveness. With regard to awareness raising and capacity building service, 67 of the respondents witnessed that the service was high or very high. 66 (76.7%) of the respondents rated the self-

help group formation and development service as having high or very high effectiveness. 56 (65.1%) of the respondents perceive the effectiveness of business development services as high or very high. provision of revolving fund was rated high or very high by a total of 53 (61.6%) respondents while less than half (or 47%) rated the vocational education and training services as high or very high. About 16.3% perceived the vocational education and training service as having low effectiveness. 31.4% even rated the services as not at all effective. In general, it is safe to conclude that the interventions made by the CSOs are effective in addressing the vulnerability situations of the involved women.

Table 4. Impacts of the interventions on Women's Lives

Type of Impact	Perceived Level of Improvement			
	High	Moderate	Low	No change
Improvement of number of meals for family per day	46 (53.5)	35 (40.7)	4 (4.7)	1 (1.1)
Improved family income	32 (37.2)	40 (46.5)	13 (15.1)	1 (1.1)
Number of children going to school increased	34 (39.5)	39 (45.3)	7 (8.1)	6 (7.0)
Employment sustained	26 (30.2)	47 (54.7)	12 (14.0)	1 (1.1)
Finance properly managed	23 (26.7)	31 (36.1)	11 (12.8)	21 (24.4)
Owned material assets	32 (37.2)	42 (48.8)	9 (10.5)	3 (3.5)
Access to market improved	11 (12.8)	23 (26.7)	38 (44.2)	14 (16.3)
Improved health condition	27 (31.4)	42 (48.8)	11 (12.8)	6 (7.0)

Whether the interventions influenced their living standards or not, the participating women were asked to indicate their perceived levels of improvement on four-point scale by rating either high, moderate, low, or no change. About 94% witness that food security has been realized for their family members to a moderate or high level. Some interviewed women also asserted that they can feed their family members at least two times a day. Family health was improved for 84.8% of the women. One can associate the improvement of health condition to the improvement of food security for majority of the participants. Results of the interview with the women disclosed that knowledge created through health awareness has helped some of them to exercise control over the means of transmission of some diseases. Another woman says:

“I was a bit careless about my-self. I didn't feel important to keep my-self alive for I have no money to visit hospitals. Now, I am able to generate income that is sufficient to live on. Thus my attitude about my own self has changed. I can also afford to buy medicine when prescribed by a Doctor.”

(One of the interviewees)

Self-employment was reported to have been sustained moderately or highly for about 73.9% of the women. This might have led to improved family income which was reported by 83.7%. For over 84% of the surveyed women the number of children attending schools has increased than it used to be prior to the intervention. In addition, 34 women completed literacy classes. They are now able to read, write and do simple arithmetic computations. Beyond becoming able to communicate using literacy skills, they also do the better for the education of their children. More number of participants (62.8%) are able to manage their finance properly. Although the reason is not currently known nearly one-third of the women find it difficult to manage finance. About 4 in 5 women (i. e., 80%) started owning material assets which they found hard to find before the interventions.

FINDINGS

The results of data analysis suggest that the surveyed urban women used to suffer from a number of challenges despite variation in the level of intensity. The challenges mostly relate to inability to build social and economic capitals. Unemployment, lack of productive assets and poor housing are among the highest in the list of challenges the adult women faced before interventions were made by the CSOs.

The vulnerability context of the involved women considerably varied from person to person implying the importance of diversified responses to lift them out of their poverty situations. In their approaches, the CSOs employed variety of livelihoods strategies depending on the needs of the participants. Capacity building, community organization, and job creation services were among the common intervention made to support needy women improve their livelihoods. Job creation services had benefited over 83% of the women, while 74.4% were supported financially so as to start their own businesses as immediately as they could. Moreover, the beneficiaries rated the level of the provided services as either high or very high. A general conclusion can be drawn that the interventions were effective in meeting the diversified needs of the women.

Determining how, and in what ways the interventions affected the lives of the beneficiaries was among the objectives of this survey. Findings indicated that for many of the women, employment was secured; food security was enhanced; family income level and health status have shown improvement. In addition, for over 84% of the women, number of meal per day has been raised to at least two times for their family members. Still for some women, number of children attending schools have shown increment as compared to the time prior to the intervention.

Despite the noted improvements in the living standards of the women, access to market remains a challenge for significant number of the women. Poor financial management is also another threat to the lives of over one-third of the women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conducting market survey for products and services is the first step to entering into new business venture. In addition, improving storage mechanisms and maintaining hygienic conditions of products is important to attract buyers. Sharing information and forming network with women engaged in similar activities would also assist in minimizing problems related to market. Training for self-employment and/or income generating activities must be supplemented with training in business development, market survey, access to market for products and services so that the involved women benefit to the fullest opportunity possible.

The efforts focusing on reducing poverty situations for women through improvement of livelihoods would become more successful, not through isolated efforts, but when supported by collaborations and partnerships among the local government structure, CSOs, community members, and the different sectors of the economy. Being organized in informal self-help groups such as saving and loan (e. g. equb) as well as approaching formal micro finance institutions through facilitation by local administration, would help create easy access to finance. Mutual trust and cohesion among members of the self-help group

In designing livelihoods intervention programs, it would be good to involve women in assessing needs so that the programs are tailored to their specific needs. Linking entrepreneurship training with micro-finance institutions would also help the women get dependable access to credits and sustain self-employment endeavors with positive results.

Informal sources of finance such as village savings although easily accessible and fast in processing, require organizing into self-help groups with strong social cohesion and trust among members.

The current study is based on self-report by the respondents. Introduction of pre-test, post-test followed by impact assessment might depict the true changes observed in the behaviors and lives of the women beneficiaries.

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