



Proceeding on:

Regional Linking and Learning Meeting by Her Choice Alliance Ethiopia

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**Haile Resort,
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1. Introduction

Her Choice is one of the prominent projects funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and being implemented in 11 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The alliance at the Netherlands level includes Kinderpostzegels, International Child Development Initiative(ICDI) and The Hunger Project(THP) Netherlands. Coming to Ethiopia level, it has 9 implementing partners in Ethiopia. The Hunger Projects has also her choice project in Ghana and Uganda. These implementing partners from Africa and the funding organizations at the Netherlands level were included in the regional linking and learning meeting. The meeting has been organized in Ethiopia for the period 07-12 October, 2018 at Hawassa city, Haile Resort. The main purpose of this meeting was to share lessons on Her Choice project and improve the implementation capacities of partners in Her Choice.

The regional linking and learning meeting has been initiated by the Her Choice Alliance members in the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. In May, 2018, it has been decided to organize the regional meeting in Ethiopia, Hawassa city. This was because the number of partners in Ethiopia is by far higher than the others. The Her choice implementing partners in Ethiopia agreed to organize the meeting in the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) and Oromia. Amhara region hosted the delegation visit from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Her choice alliance at the Netherlands level, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Addis Ababa, the Her Choice and Yes I Do Alliances in Ethiopia and the Bureaus of Amhara regional state in May, 2018.

The projects of Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE), Wabe Children's Aid and Training (WCAT) in South Gondar zone, Yes I Do project in Bahir Dar Zuria led by Amref and Plan Ethiopia have been visited by the joint delegation. Besides, the geographic accessibility of the implementing partners in Southern Ethiopia (Oromia and SNNP) has been taken as an advantage to organize the meeting in Hawassa.

In order to share responsibilities and roles among partners, the organizer of the meeting was decided to be The Hunger Project Ethiopia (THP-E). The implementing projects in Sidama zone of SNNPR, namely, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Birhan Integrated Community Development Organization(BICDO) and African Development Aid Association(ADAA) in Oromia /West Arsi zone have taken roles to organize field visits. In addition, each of the Her Choice partners in Ethiopia have been discharging their responsibilities in sharing experiences while implementing the Her Choice project in Ethiopia. The experiences were shared through movies, erection banners, bulletins, presentations , group discussions and field observations during the meeting dates.

2. Travel schedule from Addis to Hawassa

On October 07, 2018 (day zero), the participants of the workshop from HC partners in Ethiopia and Ghana started traveling to Hawassa on 07 October 2018 with two Coaster buses. The rest of the participants from Uganda and the Netherlands took flights from Addis Ababa to Hawassa. The team started travelling from Meskel square at 10:30 AM in the morning, took lunch at Haile Resort, Ziway and arrived Lewi Resort/Hawassa at 04:30 PM. The participants have been given with a very nice view of rooms at Lewi Resort, dinner and breakfasts were served there for the meeting days. The meeting hall and the lunch was served at Haile Resort in which most of the participants were impressed by their very good services at the resort. Accommodation and welcome dinner was served at Lewi Resort by the organizer of the meeting, THP-E. The facilitators/ moderators of this travel schedule are Birhane and Muna from THP-E.

3. Registration of participants, presentation on the objective and programme of the meeting:

During day 01, in the morning of 08 October 2018, registration of participants and self introduction has been done. Mr. Berhane from THP-E explained the objectives, subjects/contents and logistics aspects of HC Regional linking and learning workshop. He presented the specific objectives of the regional linking and learning meeting from 08-12 October, 2018 at Hawassa, Ethiopia, held at Haile resort.

The objectives of the meeting were presented by THP-E. These objectives are to:

- share knowledge about the child marriages programmes of Her Choice Partners in Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda and the Netherlands
- gain knowledge about Girls Quat, Her Choice communications, etc, the national policies in place in Ethiopia and become informed about implementation of policies on the prevention of child marriage; at national and regional level
- share working methodologies, approaches, best practices and lessons learned, maximize collaboration and complementarities among Her choice partners.

He further briefed the participants on subjects/contents of the workshop. Birhane indicated the contents as follows:

- ✓ Experience sharing exchange about comprehensive sexuality education teacher training methods by Development Expertise Center(DEC)
- ✓ Unintended impact of Her Choice program in Ethiopia by Wabe Children's Aid and Training (WCAT)

- ✓ Children as researchers by International Child Development Initiatives(ICDI) and Education for Sustainable development(ESD)
- ✓ Interventions for married girls (child mothers)and special tools for youth friendly services by Kinderpostzegels and University of Amsterdam
- ✓ Presentation of / training on Her Choice Communications by (ICDI)
- ✓ Presentation of / training on Girls Quat / Youth Friendly Schools (ICDI/ESD)
- ✓ Participatory self evaluation of collaboration within the Her Choice Alliance (AISSR/UvA)
- ✓ Field visit to Her Choice project in three different sites in Sidama Zone (2) and West Arsi Zone (1)

He also notified the **most important information** to be known about logistics, refreshment, communication and health break. He notified the location of the rest rooms, where to be served for refreshments/lunch at Haile Resort and gave the telephone contact address of THP-E responsible personnel (Birhane and Muna).

4. Welcome and opening remarks: By mr. Henk van Zuidam from Kinderpostzegels and mr.Yared from Ethiopia

Following the registration and introduction of the participants and objective of the meeting, welcome and opening remarks were respectively forwarded by mr. Yared from Ethiopia representing all the her choice Ethiopian partners and mr. Henk represented the Her Choice Netherlands team from Kinderpostzegels. Mr. Yared represented the nine Her Choice partners of Ethiopia and presented on behalf of the focal organization, FSCE and made some briefing on the background information for Ethiopia. He explained that the child marriage prevalence rate in Ethiopia is 41% and the alliance members are working in three big regional states of Ethiopia namely, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR where the prevalence of CM and FGM problems is high. He further explained on how the Ethiopian partners started the areas of collaboration among themselves by specifying areas of specialization, strengthens and limitations in the year 2016. Besides, he stressed the linking and learning activities done through the child marriage fund through Plan International Ethiopia and the supports from The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Addis Ababa. He welcomed the participants and called up on mr. Henk for the opening remarks on this vital linking and learning meeting.

Mr. Henk from Kinderposzegels explained the importance of the regional linking and learning meeting organized in Ethiopia. He stressed the relevance of learning at the level of Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana and the Netherlands. Then, mr. Yared invited participants of the regional linking and learning meeting to introduce themselves, their position and where they come

from. Accordingly, participants from the invited countries (the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda) introduced themselves and their organization.

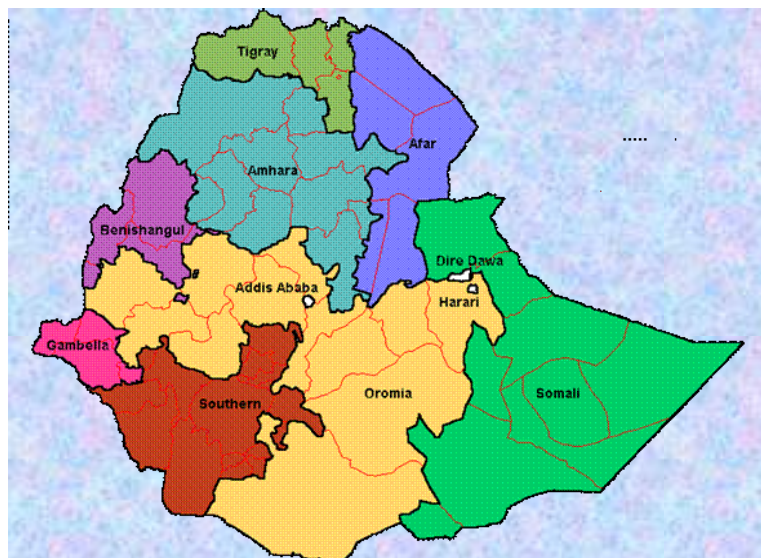
5. Achievements versus planned activities, major problems encountered and actions taken: The case of nine HC partners in Ethiopia, THP-Ghana and THP-Uganda

5.1. Achievements of the case of nine HC partners in Ethiopia

The nine her choice partners preferred to have a consolidated presentation for the nine partners instead of individual organization presentations. Participants of the meeting were invited to refer the erected banners of each organization and discuss with colleagues representing the organizations during break time for having detailed and quantitative information. Ato Ayalew Ejigu, the program coordinator from Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was invited to present the summarized achievements of HC Ethiopia. The content of her choice Ethiopia presentation include profile of HC alliance, major interventions and results and main challenges and measures taken.

In the profile of the project, Mr. Ayalew introduced the title of the Her Choice as Addressing SRH issues and mentioned the funding sources of the 7 implementing partners is Kinderpostzorg Nederland, for ESD the donor is ICDI and that of THP-E is THP-Netherlands. The nine implementing partners are THP-E, FSCE, ESD, WCAT, ADAA, LIA-E, BICDO, DEC & ODWACE. The duration of the project is from 01 July 2016 to 31st December 2020(54 months) with total budget of 2,438,923 Euros.

The geographic intervention areas of HC Ethiopia are in three big regions of Ethiopia (Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR) with in 4 zones in Amhara, 3 zones in SNNPR and 1 zone in Oromia region with total 20 districts/woredas and 105 kebeles for the whole project period.



Vision, Goal, Expected outcomes & objectives of HC Ethiopia:

Vision: to see a country where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives

Goal/Impact: to enhance decision making capacity of girls and young women on SRHR issues

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased control of girls in decision making, especially on SRH issues
- Greater decision making space of girls through communities and government structures that are responsive to positive SRH behaviors

As set out in the HC contextualized theory of change, the project has the following six main strategies:

- Invest in girls' their knowledge ,skills and participation in society
- Improve access to formal education for girls
- Improve access to youth friendly srh services for girls
- Improve the economic security of girls and their families
- Mobilize communities on SRH issues through multi-stakeholder approach to transform social norms
- Facilitate an enabling environment for CBOs and engage local authorities to prevent SRH problems

5.2. Achievements versus planned activities

The main results under each intervention were highlighted in the Ethiopian country based presentation.

Strategy I: Intervention and Results

The main interventions under strategy one were CSRH Education, life skills, peer education, social mobilization skills and



scholastic material support. The major results in this strategy include: increased self esteem & self confidence, decision making & leadership roles, girls' enrollment increase and dropout rate & absenteeism decreased, involvement of girls in peer education & social mobilization events enhanced (outreach capacity enhanced), girls' regular attendance & education increased, girls' capacity to claim their

rights enhanced', girls improved social networks & communications. and girls bargaining power strengthened.

Strategy II: Interventions and Results

The main interventions in strategy II include teachers training on CSRH & gender, club support, school infrastructure development and tutorial support



which results in increased girls' friendly school environment (separate toilet rooms for boys and girls, safe room for girls), increased responsive capacity of teachers, school principals, PTSAs towards the SRH issues, improved girls' school participation, strengthened girls', SRH and gender clubs and reduced gender gap at school/education.

Strategy III: Interventions and Results

The main interventions are training for HEW, skill training on Homemade sanitary pad production & use, orientation on reporting CM & FGM cases, development of referral slips, strengthen health institutions with first aid kits, link schools with health institutions and work closely with the KHEWs. The main results are improved referral services for adolescent boys & girls, improved linkages between schools & health institutions and enhanced responsiveness capacity of KHEWs.

Strategy IV: Interventions and results

The main interventions in the economic empowerment component include organize the mothers in saving groups, train mothers on BBS, BDS & IGA, enable mothers to identify potential IGAs, provide start-up revolving fund for the members and linking with financial institution. The results in this strategy are establishments of saving groups for vulnerable mothers, increased mothers' income & mothers could cover educational & household expenses of children and enhanced decision making, representation role and participation level of mothers at household & community level.

Strategy-VI: Interventions and results

The interventions are creating coordination and collaboration among stakeholders on prevention of CM, FGM & SRH problems, capacitate law enforcing bodies with training on negative effects of CM & FGM, experience sharing among actors, organize national & Regional workshops, media dialogue, child led bazaar, interface meeting among actors (all alliances, government, community representatives such as Kebele administration, club leaders and CBOs). The results include increased responsiveness capacity of the duty bearers, increased commitments of actors in protecting SRH problems, enhanced collaboration & networking among stakeholders, engagement of Her Choice Program Partners with Regional Government experts and officials strengthened. To this end, three regional workshops at Oromia, Ahmara and SNNPR were effectively held.

5.3. Major problems encountered and actions taken

Finally, the Ethiopian presentation was completed by pointing out main challenges and measures taken

Challenges	Measures taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of health professions on age examination to prevent CM • Absence of appropriate medical age examination equipment in health institutions to cancel CM cases • Lack of realistic and reliable evidence on CM and FGM • Deep rootedness & dynamism of practices on CM and FGM • CHSA law/restrictions to work on right based issues/CM & FGM/ • Resource limitation compared to high demand • Peace and stability issues • Law enforcement gaps to take • actions on SRHR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Estimations and observations are being done. Use the existing religious and CBO structures for birth certificates & working closely with the vital registration offices ✓ Working very closely with the community structures ✓ Working through community & school structures to disseminate good practices ✓ Empowering the law enforcing bodies, lobby on CM and HTPs through regional and national meetings

5.4. Best practices and lessons learned of the HC partners Ethiopia

After the morning tea break, Mr. Yared presented the best practices and lessons learned from HC partners Ethiopia. The moderator was Mrs. Winny Koster from Amsterdam Institute of Social Sciences for Research (AISSR). He explained the process of documentation of the best practice, tasks accomplished and criteria for selecting the best practices. He explained the 12 selected best practices in the document produced by HC Ethiopia. The document is entitled

as Best Practices and workable strategies in Addressing Child marriage and other SRH issues in Amhara, Oromia and SNNP regions; Her choice alliance Sexual and Reproductive Health Project in Ethiopia.

First mr. Yared explained the process of the documentation (development of ToR, bid announcement, selection of a consultant and contracting and taking assignments of tasks by the partners for producing the document. Next he discussed the assignments of the tasks. These tasks were actors/organizations mapping for documentation of best practices and identifying & documenting workable strategies & best practices.

His next points of attention were on the data types, sources and collection methods for best practices documentation. The sources of data were primary & secondary data sources; the methods of data collection included review of secondary data-project documents, reports, publications, research outputs and the primary data collection was done through questionnaires, KII, IDI, FGDs.

The main tasks accomplished included mapping of organizations facilitated by the consultant & finally short listed by the alliance team that had two stages; preliminary and final stages. In the preliminary stage, 50 NGOs & 22 governmental organizations were identified for the work and followed by the final stage of selection of partners from HC members(8 orgs namely, FSCE, ADAA, BICDO, ESD, LIA-E, THP, WCAT & ODWACE), from YES-I-DO members DEC, from GAA Plan International Ethiopia, and from government sectors MoWCA, NATECM, & BoWCA, BoE, BoH have been identified.

The main six main criteria for selecting the best practices by the consulting firm included effectiveness, efficiency/cost effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, innovativeness and replicability. Accordingly, a total of 12 best practices were identified. These best practices were:

Best Practice 1: Women's development army & 1-to-5 neighborhood networks that played key roles for a wider outreach in the fight against CM-experience of Amhara BoWCA. They are used for awareness of communities and Women Development Group became key actors in the cancellation of cases. In this line, 1,517 kebeles have been freed from different HTP, including CM and girls refused to marry.

Best Practice 2: the role of siinqee in Oromia region which is women's customary institution in tackling CM & FGM- in the case of southern Oromiya especially in Arsi zone.

Best Practice 3: community mobilization in the fight against CM & FGM practices indicated as the good experiences of SNNPRS BOWCA.

Best Practice 4: 'Maherebe' training by Development Expertise Center/DEC/ and the manuals are effective model for school based comprehensive sexuality education programming by all partners.

Best Practice 5: creating a strong linkage between schools & CBOs, which played a pivotal role in tackling CM by Wabe Children's Aid and Training (WCAT) in South Gondar zone, Fogera woreda.

Best Practice 6: girl's sport program as a means to enhance their participation in the schools & to change the public mindset in the case of BICDO, ESD and THP-E.

Best Practice 7: establishing strong partnership with community structures, which contributed a lot in creating a safe environment for girls & young women-in the case of GAA/Plan International Ethiopia at Lalibella.

Best Practice 8: community watch groups that have played a key role in the fight against CM, FGM & other related HTP issues taken from the experience of FSCE's Jamma project.

Best Practice 9: menstrual hygiene management practices to reduce the number of school dropouts: the case of geteme primary & secondary cycle school-LIA-E in Silte zone.

Best Practice 10: community conversation as a multi trust tool in the fight against deep rooted HTPs. This is the case from Geza Washa kebele of Ensaro district which are intervention areas of THP-E & ESD in Northern Shoa in Amhara region.

Best Practice 11: Integrated intervention which is crucial to sustain changes brought as a result of CM & FGM programming- the case of ADAA in Wondo district.

Best Practice 12: Joint experience sharing events as effective collaborative & learning platform by all the alliance members of Her Choice.

5.5. Lessons learned from HC Ethiopia

- If children and girls are given the opportunity to participate and engage in any community development initiative, they have the capacity to become change agents in their own wellbeing as well as contribute meaningfully to their community.

- The '*Meharebe*' CSE training manual has been well taken up in all contexts with minor contextualization. The methodology has been found to be friendly for adolescents and youths, and trainees have enjoyed all the training sessions.
- In all of the visited *woreda*'s, religious leaders and community elders (or either of them depending on the area context) are the priority targets of awareness-raising activities, realizing that they have been serving as key players in changing unfavorable social norms such as CM and FGM/C. Indeed, they played a key role in the reduction of the HTPs in their localities.
- The participation of school principals in CSE training is important for the effective cascading of students' training at school level.
- Community conversations and peer educations are critical to bring about behavioral and attitudinal changes in the target beneficiary.
- Capacitating and empowering school model girls and young women on SRH issues are crucial for social mobilization and school SRH information dissemination.
- Working to change the attitudes and behavior of the community is crucial in ending child marriage and FGM, as well as other HTPs.
- The use of **anonymous people** as the '**eyes and ears**' - *aynina joro* - from the community member has been instrumental in detecting and reporting on underground practices of CM and FGM/C.
- The use of Women Development Groups and 1-to-5 neighborhood networks has been effective in extending the fight against CM and FGM.
- Empowering women/mothers economically is crucial in sending and retaining children in school.
- **Engaging boys:** it is known that the gender issue is not only the issue of women and cannot be addressed by the involvement of women or girls alone. It needs engaging men/boys. Hence, HC project partners should give attention to engaging males within the project activities.
- Community mobilization is the key to preventing child marriage and FGM.
- Joint workshops and experience-sharing events were effective learning platforms.

- Creating a rewarding mechanism: in any development endeavor, those individuals from the community, girls from school, and institutions from the targeted organizations need to be rewarded
- Strong coordination between government structures and NGOs is crucial for success, especially now that NGOs are unable to work directly at community level, following the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009.
- Working with community members at a grassroots level and using local government structures to carry out various activities has been found very effective.
- Persistence is the key for success in the efforts of eliminating the practice of CM and FGM/C.
- Mainstreaming is effective and efficient:
- Joint effort brings result: The multifaceted nature of the problems demands strong collaboration among wider actors.
- Deepening inter- and intra-alliance linking and learning:
- Empowering children and their institutions plays pivotal roles in enhancing their bargaining, negotiation and communication power so as to make them active and vibrant change agents of their own issues.
- Feasible and sustainable livelihood schemes: parallel to the attitudinal and cultural problems, the poverty issues in general and the precarious livelihood status of families in particular is one of the major causes of the practice of CM and FGM. Enhancing the livelihood status of the parents/guardians/families could serve as a prevention mechanism and enable families to fulfill, respect and protect the rights of their children/girls.
- **Documentation is key tool:** for learning and linking purposes, documentation plays a significant role to produce tangible evidence.

5.6. Challenges and Constraints

The major challenges were:

- Security issues at different parts of the country during the first quarter of 2018 and a few months before together with the state of emergency situation disrupted movement of alliance members which delayed the implementation of the activities.
- Some Alliance Partners did not send financial reports on time for timely liquidation.

6. Best practices and lessons learned of the HC partners: the case of THP-Ghana

This was presented by a representative from THP-Ghana, Ms. Patricia. Some of the best practices from Ghana include the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project and their close collaboration with the ministry of gender as well as the Netherlands Embassy in Ghana, considering community members at the center of the program, the formulation of community by-laws at the epi-centers, the use of animators and epi-center staff for community activities, the use of dignity kits by girls, the use of income generating activities by teen mothers and the availability of tea room and menstrual pads for in room emergency cases.

- 1. Involvement of stakeholders in project implementation**
Relevant departments from the local government, thus, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justices, Gender and Children department, Department of Social development, the Police, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, etc
- 2. Strong working relationship with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection**
Report half yearly to the ministry progress made under the HCP and from time to time also participate in meetings and events organized by the ministry
- 3. Good working relationship with the Netherlands Embassy in Ghana**
 - Participate in the Embassy's' annual strategic stakeholder forum to share outcomes and progress of the HCP
 - Plans are still underway to take a team from the embassy to visit some HC epicenters before the close of the year
 - Participate in meetings involving officials from the Netherlands Foreign ministry to share success stories
- 4. Community partners and stakeholders are at the center and the implementers of the HCP**
Community leaders e.g. by- laws development
 - Animators (Child Marriage Preventive Committees, WEP, HIV&AIDS), HC Girls and boys club patrons, teachers and school heads, epicenter health staff and peer educators
- 5. Promoting the use of dignity kits and safe rooms for school girls as one of the ways of creating girl/child friendly school environments**
 - Ten participating schools have imitated and in some cases almost completed the construction of separate toilets and urinal for schools children in their efforts of making the schools girl/child friendly and enrolled three teen mothers and school-drop outs back to school
- 6. The use of Girl Child Coordinators and circuit supervisors from the Ghana Education Service to supervise HC activities in schools and at club meetings**
- 7. Baseline results feedback sessions with HC communities to promote effective participation.**

6.1. Project achievements by THP-Ghana

- Increased in school enrolment and retention rate; about one third of school children were punctual to school for the past one year from now
- Girls are becoming more assertive and open to demanding their rights; a girl reported the mother to her club patron about the workload the mother gives to her at home while the male siblings do virtually no work
- In all the 46 schools under the HCP, there was no report of a school girl getting pregnant in the past one year.
- About 50 community members have been trained as Child Marriage Preventive Committees in communities to advocate for children's rights
- Re-entry of 3 adolescent girls back to school
- Construction of 6 toilet facilities and urinal in school as a way of creating girl friendly school environment
- About 41 communities have started and or enacted by-laws against child marriage and other child abuses in their communities
- 2018 Girls and Boys Camp: A 5-day residential educational camp was organized for 95 girls and boys Her Choice Club members including club patrons and officials from the Ghana Education Service. Besides, topics treated were; leadership skills, Child Rights, Know the Law, Child abuses and procedures in reporting cases of abuse, among others



School Management Committees and Teachers Training Workshop

Under this activity a 2-day review training workshop has been organized for teachers, club patrons and school heads. The objective of the training was to equip school authorities, communities, teachers and the local government agency responsible for education to create girl/child friendly school environment. As a result schools are putting measures in place to creating girl friendly environments.

Education and sensitization activities in schools and communities

Here community partners and school children sensitized and educated on Child marriage, SHRH, gender, Child Rights, etc

Health staff review training workshop

41 Health staff and epicenters nurses received refresher training on SRHR, YFHS, Family Planning, Child Rights, Gender, supervision among others. Health staff acquired new skills and ways of handling and dealing with adolescent girls and boys

Sensitization with married girls and teen mothers

Married girls, teen mothers educated on SRHR including family planning. They also received education on the negative health effects of child marriage on the adolescent girls. Skills development and livelihoods options were also discussed.

Community leaders training

Five hundred community leaders have received training on Childrens' Act of Ghana, child rights, and the development of bye-laws on child marriage in their communities. In addition, Interview with nurses, community leaders, stakeholders at the Mfantseman municipal assembly and interview with teachers respectively on changes in child marriage cases and in the general performance of the Her Choice Project was held.

Mid-Term Evaluation: the project conducted a successful mid-term evaluation survey in 4 epicenters. Country report submitted to University of Amsterdam.

6.2. Major Problems encountered

- Lack of accurate data from Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of Ghana Police Service

7. Best practices and lessons learned of the HC partners: the case of THP- Uganda,

This was presented by a representative from THP-Uganda, Ms. Joyce. Some of the best practices from Uganda include the **priorities to involve deaf people in to the school environment** which was initiated by my choice financing. Their motto is "Disability is not inability". For this activity they engaged 60 deaf peer educators to educate the deaf students about SRH, CM and other harmful practices. They supported deaf girls with re-usable sanitary pads and train them with skills of making money. They provide emergency services for girls by senior women teachers. Their best practice among others is they have very good experience and results in inclusion of deaf students in the Her Choice program and they developed a joint plan with the concerned sectors.

In the mean time, some questions were asked by ODWaCE Board Chairperson, Ato Admassie Wondimu. He asked three main concerns in all the presentations of the morning sessions day one. He said that there should be a distinction line between child marriage and early marriage. Participants commented that child marriage is a better use of word instead of early marriage. Because early marriage has no definite age limit and the her choice program shall use child marriage. The second concern raised was the best practices issue. He said that if things have reached to the level of best practices, there is no need to invest on projects and programs. It should be corrected as promising/good practices instead of best practices.

The third concern is the child marriage free villages in Ethiopia. He asked the guarantees and criteria to declare villages as child marriage free. The word child marriage free villages does not have guarantee and it is a continuous process.

The other question raised by Love in Action Ethiopia, Mrs. Selam is on Uganda's presentation whether they include other types of disability other than the deaf or not. The representatives indicated that they also work on other types of disability even if the priorities are on the deaf children. And participants commented that mainstreaming disability is expensive but innovative task.

8. Similarities and differences between the countries where the Her Choice Program is implemented plus the challenges

The differences in the her choice alliance between Uganda/Ghana with that of Ethiopia is the latter works as an alliance and the former focuses on persons with disabilities especially that of the deaf. The youth friendly services and SRH in Ethiopia depends on the partners interventions but in Uganda there is no right on sexual education. For the capacity building component there are specialized organizations and institutions. There is advocacy in Uganda but not in Ethiopia to work on child marriage and FGM.

8.1. Unintended Impacts of Her Choice project

Before the participants were divided in to small workshops, the facilitators of the session briefed on the objective of the topic given and how group members can come up with results in the plenary. Mr. Henk van Zuidam was the moderator of the whole session and for the specific sessions THP-Uganda, WCAT,ICDI/ESD briefed on the similarities and differences, unintended impacts and children as researchers.

For the unintended impacts of the her choice program, Mr. Alemu Abegaz from WCAT briefed the participants on the positive and negative unintended impacts observed in the course of implementation. After presenting the objective of dealing with positive and negative unintended impacts, the participants have formed two groups to come up with agreed up on points. The purpose of identifying the positive and negative unintended impacts of the project is to stress/enrich on the positive ones and make recommendations for the negative

unintended impacts. Then, the first group was facilitated by WCAT and the secretary was Mrs. Simona from ICDI.

The participants requested on how have been the impacts identified. The impacts were identified by the partners and special format has been dispatched for the focal persons to come up with positive and negative unintended impacts in their choice project implementation. Instances of impacts were cited by partners that have encountered the impacts. Afterwards, both positive and negative unintended impacts were thoroughly discussed by the partners and participants. Ato Alemu and the rest of the participants explained the points and filtered it for the plenary session later on.

The unintended impacts as explained by the presenter can be **positive or negative** resulting in the project. As per the rapid assessment with the dispatched format, the positive and negative unintended impacts points and WCAT's findings from the HC partners were presented to the house by Mrs. Simona as follows:

1. Positive unintended impacts:

- Boys participation in homemade Menstrual pads production
- Explore potentials for talents of girls/boys in Sports, Journalism and acting/drama
- Use of local made sanitary materials by mothers and other family members
- As a result of enhanced awareness, community members could identify other **HTPs**
- Decentralization of YFS to health posts in addition to Health centers and hospital.
- The SHG approach gears towards developing standardized tools among partners
- Consensus reached among the three regions to develop a joint action plan on CM, FGM and other
- Establishment of Children parliament in Amhara region
- Joint resource mobilization and design of resource mobilization strategy by the alliance
- Platform formation with other alliances(GUSO, GAA, YID)
- Development of Gender mainstreaming guideline and Gender Club guideline in collaboration with MoE
- Mainstreaming the issue of CM, FGM and SRH in school Plasma initiatives
- Interests of government local media (tv, radio...face book) to freely disseminate HC results and good practices by their own initiatives

II. Negative unintended impacts

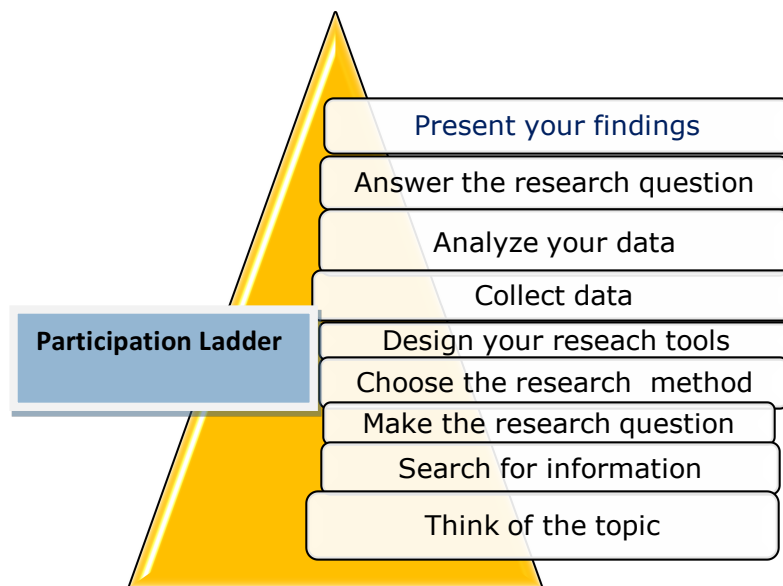
- Reporting cases of CM & FGM results in conflict
- Open SRH discussion led to early sexual debate, unplanned pregnancy and abortion cases.
- Engagement of mothers in IGA exposed children to additional work burden,
- Hidden practices of HTPs(CM & FGM) & changing of strategies by families to the law
- Conflicts of interests while reporting cases and legal measures are taken (among community members, between the school & the kebele, b/n kebele admin & parents)
- The awareness raising education given on disadvantages of FGM negatively influenced the psychology of uncircumcised girls in the project.

9. Best practices and lessons learned from HC partners: the case of THP/ICDI-Netherlands

This was presented by Mrs. Simona from ICDI and Ms. Aisha from THP-N and the moderator was mr. Henk from Kinderpostzegels Netherlands. THP-N indicated that they use comic drawings for child talents, use of MHM by girls for girls, video (you tube) for film story. Besides, they use sports of mixed team for ensuring gender equality and enhance gender participation. The main issue presented was the topic on children as researchers (or research by children themselves). This is used to alleviate the lack of reliability of data in the program. It provides us with sufficient data by children for children. One of the outlined good practices from the donors in the Netherlands is the issue of children as researchers.

9.1. Children as researchers by THP-N and ICDI

For the topic on children as researchers, participation ladder was emphasized.



Ms. Aisha from THP-Netherlands facilitated the topic on children as researchers by posing three important brain storming questions. These questions were the following:

- Would you like to support girls and boys in **understanding** the world they live in?
- Do you want to give them the necessary **skills to take decisions** based on this understanding?
- Would you like to support them to become **agents of change** in their communities and as future citizens?

She explained the right to childhood and the right to be educated. I hear and I forget, I see and I remember and I do and I understand. She further requested two ethical issues for the participants. These were:

- Is the research process supportive of children's wellbeing?
- Or are children being exploited (in the research process)?

Aisha also explained **what the concept of research is based on the participants view!** Research is a 'finding out' activity, it is about asking questions, exploring issues and reflecting on findings and it is (or should be) ethical, systematic, and skeptical.

Also the research ladder and importance of children as researchers was dealt. It was asked that why is it important?, What are different approaches?, exploring creative research methods, ethical considerations, research and Child Marriage and what can participants expect from ICDI?

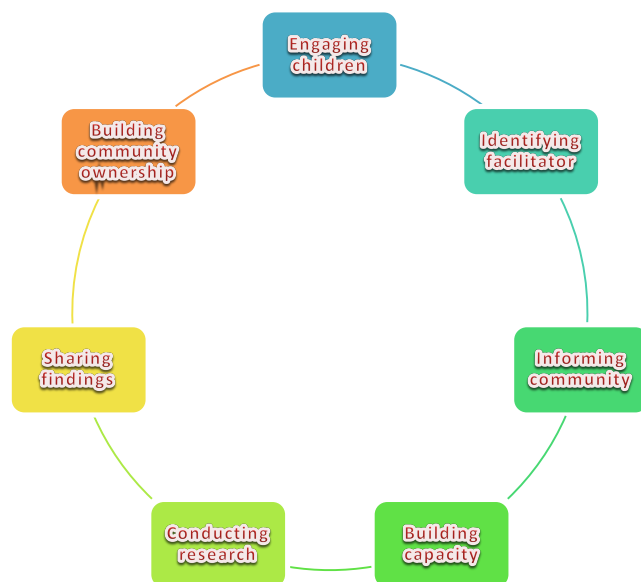
Why research with and by children is important?

This is mainly because children are experts on their lives, children's experiences different to adults - have different concerns, acknowledges their right to be heard highlights need for their views to be taken seriously, valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge and can support the development and direction of society, community, school, club, and activity.

Some of the benefits of research by children *for* children are:

Learning by doing Research process -> advanced learning tool – making choices, reflecting, critical thinking, sharpens writing, communication and organizational skills and advances learning through motivation and ownership, achieving success. Children observe with different eyes, ask different questions, have different concerns, boys and girls have different takes on their experiences and contexts, have immediate access to peer culture, valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge, children's self-efficacy and agency is enhanced and children raise awareness in communities, strengthen their support network and contribute to improve children's lives.

The 7-phase process of children-led research are the following:



In day one, feedback of discussions in the two working groups was given and mr. Henk was facilitating the session and finally the closure of the daily session was congratulated.

10. Presentation of training on girls QUAT and visualization tools: by ICDI/ESD and AISSR/UvA

On Day 02, October 09, 2018, the recap of day one by Love in Action Ethiopia (LIA-E) has been made and the meeting continued with presentation of training on girls QUAT and visualization of tools. Mrs. Simona explained the why of girls QUAT (Quality Assessment Tools) in the Her Choice alliance. The QUAT is important for children as they are experts on their own life and there is need for equal discussion.

Mrs. Winny Koster from UvA/AISSR briefed the participants on visualization tools for youth friendly services and girls' friendly tools. She made introductions on the rationale behind the development of tools, the process of development of the tools and how to practice the visualization tools. She advised the participants to test the tools at the field using participatory assessment method, discuss on the strengths and limitations of the tools and develop plan of action for improvement of the tools. The participants were divided in to three groups to practice the girls, youth and health providers' tools. Then, this was followed by presentation of the group works. The group members came up with spider diagrams, explained the differences of the observation tools and requested to consider possible actions based on the findings.

THP-Ghana and ESD-Ethiopia presented their experiences from the field observation. It was briefed by Patricia and Aemro respectively. Finally, comments on the tools were provided by the participants. Some of the concerns raised on the visualization tools were its practicality for illiterate community members, inclusion of assessment of tools for home based activities such as for parents, translation of the tools and the strategies to apply in the local contexts for the three implementing countries.

Aemro from ESD Ethiopia explained their field experience. He noted the preparation, discussion session, action plan formulation and follow up of the process of observation tools from their field based test.

Mr. Henk also emphasized the realization of the tools should start this year and be integrated for the coming years and advised partners to work on the visualization tools with practical bases and prepare the action plans which are not too ambitious.

11. Presentation on HC communications

Mrs. Simona from ICDI also emphasized the types of tools to link and to learn from each other. Then, participants were sub-divided into small working groups with plenary and came up with the types of tools for linking and learning in the her choice program. Some of the

tools suggested were websites, social media, skype, face book, reports, survey monkey, online discussion, what's-app, e-mail, telephone conference, postal systems, case stories and success story compilation.

Then participants were classified in to groups to work on issues unintended impacts and children as researchers. The main questions given for the three groups of the group work were the following:

- ✚ Why to communicate about HC?
- ✚ What communication activities by your organizations and how, where, what works well?
- ✚ What else could your organization do about HC communication?
- ✚ What would you need to expand or improve your organizations HC communication?

Then, after presentation of the group works, Simona has made the summary about communication tools in Her Choice project.

12. Experience sharing on CSE teachers training methods plus youth friendly health services: By Development Expertise Center (DEC)

The facilitator/moderator of these sessions on CSE and children with children was Winny from University of Amsterdam. Based on the program, Ms. Gelanie from Development Expertise Center(DEC) presented the concept of CSE, objectives of CSE, main reasons for CSE education, the 14 lessons of Meharebe manual teachers training, what are the circles' of sexuality, why do we need CSE and the changing roles.

13. Impact of Child Marriage on child development of girls that are victims of child marriage as well as on their children (children with children)

Mrs. Simona presented the impacts of child marriage on child mothers and their children. She explained the developmental domains of children namely, physical risks, social/cultural and psychological. She also explained the impacts of child marriage and SRH problems such as Fistula and early pregnancy. It was highlighted that fistula cases are more than one million females in the world, 3000 per year in Ethiopia with 50% less than 18 years, 140,000 to 200,000 in Uganda and 1300 in Ghana. This has huge impact in the three counties especially on child mothers.

Mr.Henk explained the essence and the status of children with children project for the participants. He remembered the submission of the children with children project to the Ministry of foreign affairs of the Netherlands and both concept notes were unsuccessful. He

has given high hopes for opportunities of funding on child mothers for all partners. At this time, he said that, Kinderpostzegels and ICDI wanted to conduct pilot project on children with children with WCAT and ICDI/ESD as initial implementers. He explained the communications and invitations of the pilot project sent for WCAT and ESD. He further explained the three main pillars of this pilot project. According to mr.Henk, the three pillars of children with children project are creating economic and educational chances, parental support and health pillars. ICDI through ESD will give capacity building training or ToT on good parenting and early child development to be implemented by WCAT. Hence, it was emphasized that multigenerational approach training from ICDI and bringing together all the strategies to breakdown the cycles of child marriage is highly vital.

At the end of the session, participants were requested to come up with impressive points of the day.

14. Field visit to her choice projects in Arsi and Sidama Zones

On **Day 03: 10 October, 2018**, the participants of the regional linking and learning meeting were grouped in to three to visit the Her choice project sites of ESD and BICDO and Sidama Zone in SNNPR and ADDA's site in Wondo district at West Arsi Zone around Shashemane.

Recap of day two and field visit presentations

This has been presented by Eshetu from ADAA. He summarized the recap of child mothers , visualization tools on CSE, girls and youth and the teachers training on CSE . Next, Mrs. Adelahe from ODWaCE, Adugna from FSCE head office and Demissew from FSCE Dessie presented the findings and observations of the field visit from ESD, ADAA and BICDO respectively.

14.1. Field visit hosted by ESD at Malga woreda, Sidama Zone in SNNPR:

Group one was assigned to visit ESD's site in Malga woreda. Demissew from FSCE Dessie presented the summary of the field visit. He outlined that the field visit was very interesting and it was accompanied by the report from ESD. Then, testimony of child marriage and FGM has been presented to the visitors by girls themselves. ESD has strongly worked on girls power through the Motte/male elders and kericho/female elders.

The visit at ESD-ICDI supported project at Fito Katamuna kebele in Malga Woreda was conducted by the participants of the linking and learning regional meeting from the three countries of HC alliance. Representing the head office of ESD, Ato Ayalew welcomed the

visitors, introduced about the details of ESD, its staffing and intervention areas. He pointed that ESD has two major projects in the South namely the HC project and youth project. ESD's HC project is working in 39 KM radius in 3 program kebeles & 2 comparison ones. The demographic details of the woreda indicated that 51% of the populations are females. The woreda has 37 primary schools, 4 high schools, 19 health posts and a hospital. It was further elaborated the reasons for CM including negative attitude of the community, poverty and dowry. He has explained the main achievements and challenges in the six main strategies of her choice project. Next



to organizational briefing, the saving groups of mothers explained about their works. The main results of the saving groups include increase in males' involvements, mothers' role in education, reduced HTPs, violence and polygamy in the area and the resulting regular attendance of girls in education



The representatives of the kebele administration, the community, ESD project team at Hawassa and in the head office made a briefing on the HC project at this site. After the introduction by ESD, the kebele administrator briefed the participants about the works with the organization. The project is the second intervention by ESD and child marriage was prevalent in the kebele. ESD has given important trainings about CM and FGM for the community members including "Moti/elderly men" and, "Kericho/mothers", religious leaders and the school administration and hence there is a reduction in the practice of child marriage, FGM and other HTPs. This has been done by convincing the practitioners of both practices. In addition, awareness raising for the local administrators and community based "Idirrs" has been provided by the project. Since the kebele is too big, they address information through 'ketena' and then through the community conversation sessions. They also integrate social sanctions and by-laws what they call it as "Seraa".

The other important intervention done by ESD in Sidama zone, Malga district is income generating activities for mothers and the youth. They have education session for mothers,

fathers and the youth. Males' participation is observed in the intervention. In order to enhance the regular attendance of girls in education and increase their results, ESD also works in tackling cultural biases and alleviating the menstrual hygiene problems for girls. Girls sell tea in the clubs and started to generate income for purchasing menstrual hygiene materials. The mothers group also engaged in IGAs such as poultry and rearing of sheep and goats. Then, the visitors have been dressed with traditional clothes and lunch ceremony has been entertained.

14.2. Field visit hosted by BICDO at Malga woreda, Sidama Zone in SNNPR

The third group (group three) made to field visit Tenkaro General Primary School of Melga Wereda of Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State. This is a location/school where BICDO is intervening at as a Her Choice Alliance.

The group was led by Miet from The Hunger project Netherlands (THP-N). When participants arrived at the school, they received a warm welcome both from the wider community and the school community. School children were chanting and singing "Welcome our Guests".

First, participants have been introduced about the programme of the day by the executive director of BICDO, Ato Tarekegne. Following his introduction, a welcoming speech was made by the kebele administrator and the school principal respectively. The kebele administrator further outlined the various trainings different community members have taken on harmful traditional practices, especially on child marriage and female genital mutilation. The school principal had also briefed trainings given on early marriage and female genital mutilation by BICDO. Both speakers have thanked BICDO for what it has been doing for their community.

Students from the school's girls club presented edutainment with drama about abduction. A school girl was abducted by a student and his friends in the drama. The father of the abducted reported the case to the police but the police was not committed enough to present the abductor to the court. The father was then forced to bribe the police officials so that he gets his child back home safe. In the mean time, the father was shouting at and blaming his wife (the mother of the abducted girl) for what had happened. And finally the police caught the perpetrator and admitted himself and went with his friends to the court and the girl was back home to be able to pursue her education. This was really interesting and informative for the general community.

Following this, we had discussion with mothers/guardians who are involved in IGAs being in Self Help Groups. The mothers witnessed they had been able to send their girl children to school and further protect them from dropping out of school as a result of economic problems.

Moreover, they are benefiting by being able to socialize in the group, which is of paramount importance to strengthen the social bond among them. Questions were also raised by the visitors and mothers had given responses.

Participants of the visit have also observed what the school club is working on sexual and reproductive health. There are teachers from the school who have taken comprehensive sexual education training, which was given in collaboration with Development Expertise Center (DEC). The teachers have cascaded the training to students and the students have done the same to their fellow students (peers). By doing this, the school has been able to reach a wider range of community members about the importance of sexual and reproductive health.

The school is also engaged in vegetable gardening in the school compound. It aims to sell the vegetables for the local community and be able to buy educational materials for vulnerable girls at risk of child marriage.

A female football club is also formed in the school, which shows how girls are supported to assure their gender equality. It has also been reported that the girls are now able to become more confident and self expressive. Visitors have seen the students in their sport's wear. Finally a delicious traditional dish "Bursame" was served for the visitors with coffee and here comes the end of the visit at BICDO's site in Malga woreda.

14.3. Field visit hosted by ADAA at Wondo woreda in Arsi Zone/Oromia region:

Group two which was composed of representatives from the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda, led by Mrs. Simona was early heading to Wondo district to visit ADAA's site. Mr. Sileshi from ADAA took the group to the site and the beneficiaries' composed of children, club members, community members, Aba Gadaa and Sinquee representatives welcomed participants at Bosa kebele inside the church compound. The visiting team introduced where they come from and who they are! The presentation of the field visit was made by Mr. Adugna from FSCE.

The opening ceremony of the field visit was started by the blessings of Abaa Gadaa leaders or 'Abotin Gadaa'. Then the Sinquee women group presented attractive welcoming song for the visitors. Then, Sileshi from ADAA invited the kebele representative to brief visitors about the Her Choice project. Basically, one of the unique features of the visited site is it is composed of three Ethnic groups(Oromo, Amhara and Sidama). And all the presentations in Oromiffaa and Sidamigna were translated in to Amharic and English by Ato Adugna from FCSE and Sileshi from ADAA.

The kebele representative from Beshamafa zone, Bosa Kebele noted that the most harmful practices in the area are FGM and CM. To tackle these practices, they have structures at the kebele level and there are two community facilitators (one male and one female). These community volunteers are the bridges/change agents to eliminate



FGM.

Besides, there exist community conversation groups in the four corridors of the kebele. A group consisting of males and females conduct two community conversation sessions per month with in 10 to 12 months in the year. ADAA also uses Abaa Gadaa and Sinquee members/women associations to aware the community at all. The women associations are used by the women and children affairs office.

The kebele community facilitators noted that in the last two years, they came up with identification of harmful practices in the area including abduction, CM and FGM. In the last two years, they could cancel 12 FGM cases for girls through the community and school based structures. As a result, there is a great change and FGM has reduced in the kebele. Besides, abduction cases were tackled by the project.

One of the strong points of the project is the formation of two women saving groups in the kebele for the regular attendance of girls' education. The groups are fighting harmful practices and enhanced the culture of saving and loan. Basically, the rule of Oromo Abaa Gadaa structure allows girls to be married when they reach 18 years and above which is also complimentary to the revised family law and the constitution of the country. Hence, continuous awareness education on CM, FGM and abduction provided for the community.

The sinquee representatives also expressed that they are aggressively working to end harmful practices. They notified their determination to end and condemn the practices. They also give awareness on the negative consequences of these practices such as Fistula and child delivery problems. They also have experience sharing sessions with the nearby kebeles to condemn practices such as sexual violence, abduction and polygamy.

The club members organized by ADAA presented one poem and two short dramas in Amharic to the participants who were very attractive and educative. They also conduct edutainment programs at the school, in the community and kebele level using the coffee & tea ceremony and peer education.

Finally, the group representatives (Simona, Birhane and Samuel) delivered thanks and guiding advices to the host organization and the community to continue in the same energy. The woreda women and children affairs office also emphasized the importance of the Her Choice project in the area and they have the determination to work together.

15. Presentation on Collaboration with Regional Governments (the case of Ethiopia)

The Board chairperson of Organization for the Development of Women and Children Ethiopia (ODWaCE) presented to the participants about the why of collaboration and strategies for collaboration under the current government law and procedures in Ethiopia. He expressed that collaboration gives partners synergy and strength to be heard with collective voices. He further explained collaboration at the federal, regional, zonal and woreda levels. Besides, he noted the roles of various actors at these levels. The existing collaboration modalities and practices and ways of project appraisal and signing agreements have also been explained.

Ato Yared focused on the Ethiopian partners' collaboration during the selection of intervention sites, stakeholders' collaboration and devising strategies on income generation. Winny also raised her guiding questions to the participants on the where of the differences in difficulties and what are the hindrances and adjustments by the individual partners. She explained that there is high demand for community lobby and advocacy.

Collaborations of HC with GUSO, YID and GAA, with the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands have been given special attention. Experience sharing with linking and learning was highlighted. The future strategic platform among the Dutch funded alliances was found to be paramount importance. Strengthening the SRH alliance to end CM and FGM and working with Girls Not Brides International Networks has been highlighted as most of the HC alliance partners are members.

Participants from the Netherlands indicated that it is vital to accelerate linking and learning among the alliance and organize experience sharing events with actors and the Embassy in the respective countries of HC project.

16. Successes, hindrances and adjustments

In the afternoon, participatory self evaluation of collaboration within Her choice alliance has been discussed with the moderation role of Mrs. Winny and Ms. Marieke from the UvA. Participants of each implementing partners pointed out the main successes in the collaboration, hindrances and what needs to be done for the future. The participants gave the strong points and areas of success, the hindrances that they encountered in their collaboration and the way forward for the coming periods. They posted the points on the wall with stickers and participants shared the experiences on these issues.

17. Summary and closure of the meeting

Finally, the regional linking and learning meeting organized in Ethiopia has been taken as an event where different partners exchanged their achievements and results in her choice interventions, major problems encountered in the last two years and actions taken. Besides, it helped partners to take lessons and accelerate the learning and create linkage among partners. Best practices and lessons were shared among partners in the four countries (Ethiopia, Uganda and Ghana and the Netherlands).

One of the core results of the regional meeting is the identification of good practices and taking as lessons. Unintended impacts, both positive and negative, of the her choice project have been identified for further improving the performance of the program in the coming two years. The enhancement of child participation in the her choice program was gearing towards children as researchers.

The visualization tools on girls friendly schools, youth friendly services on SRH and the trainings on girls QUAT were found to be highly important to measure the results of the program at the field level by all implementing partners. The results of her choice projects in the implementing countries have been decided to be promoted through appropriate communication means and tools. The communications aspect has been emphasized and partners reached a consensus on how to use communication tools in her choice program.

The field visits of the three implementing partners in the SNNPR (ESD and BICDO) and Oromia(ADAA) have given participants ample experience. The use of girls empowerment through community and school based structures has been a very good experience. The collaboration of implementing partners with various actors at the grassroots, district, zone and woreda level using the multi-stakeholders approach by implementers of her choice is of paramount relevant. Participants observed that the her choice achievements are highly

satisfactory and interesting which encourages the journey of her choice project for the coming two years of implementation.

The collaboration among partners, with the Netherlands Embassy in the respective countries, the linking, learning and acceleration of programs among the alliances of Yes I DO, Her Choice and GUSO, collaboration with other international actors such as UNICEF and UNFPA is suggested to be highly strengthened. The creation of synergy and collaboration among partners is recommended. Strengthening alliances on SRH to end child marriage and FGM needs to be emphasized in the coming implementation period. Partners are advised to organize linking and learning programs, follow visualization tools on girls' friendly schools, apply standards for YF SRH services and girls QUAT.

All the participants of the regional linking and learning meeting expressed their deep appreciation and wonderful stay at Hawassa and heartily thanked the host organization, THP_E and those who arranged the field visit schedule, ESD, BICDO and ADAA. The Her choice implementing partners in Ethiopia acknowledged Mr. Henk for his long time contributions in improving the lives of vulnerable children and the community in the thematic areas of education, health and livelihood.

The regional linking and learning meeting has been highly appreciated, was very successful and completed on 11 October 2018 in the afternoon. The host organization, THP-E, wished all participants to have safe return to the respective areas and countries.

++++++THE END++++++