

# SUMMARY FINAL EVALUATION OF “REINTEGRATION OF STREET CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION IN SNNPR, ETHIOPIA”

Tilahun Girma, February 2016



No child forced to live on the street

# About Retrak

**Across the world, there are hundreds of thousands of children living on the streets. Every day they suffer hunger, poverty, abuse and violence.**

Retrak is a charity which reaches out to these vulnerable children to provide them with the food, medicine, clothing, hygiene and shelter which they desperately need. Beyond this, Retrak works hard to tackle the reasons why children end up on the streets - this means helping families to heal rifts, enabling children to complete their education or gain a vocational qualification and providing children and parents with the means to earn a sustainable income.

This long-term approach helps to make sure that children never have to go back to living on the street, and it works; to date more than three-quarters of the children helped by Retrak have remained at home with their families.

## Where we work

Retrak has programmes where there are thousands of street children with nowhere to turn for help.

We work in the countries shown here:



## Our VISION

**A world where no child is forced to live on the street.**

## Our MISSION

**Retrak works to transform highly vulnerable children's lives; preserve families; empower communities and give each of them a voice.**

**We put children at the very heart of everything we do and will be fearless and tenacious in defending and promoting their rights.**

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*This report was written by Tilahun Girma, a consultant, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of Retrak nor Cordaid. The full evaluation report is available on the Retrak website.*

# Introduction

Retrak has over two decades of experience of working with children on the streets in Africa and about one decade operational history in Ethiopia. Retrak Ethiopia works with children living full-time on the streets to give them a real alternative to life on the street. In 2012 Retrak's records showed that a significant proportion of children met in Addis Ababa came from Ethiopia's southern region (SNNPR) particularly from the town of Hossana and the surrounding areas. As a result, a plan was developed to address some of the push factors that were leading many children to come to the city. With support from Cordaid, a 3-year pilot community project was implemented (2012-2015). Adjustments to the project were subsequently made and a new drop-in centre in Hossana town was established to reach out to children before they arrive in the capital.

The project objectives were:

1. **Outreach and service provision to street children from SNNPR living unsupported on the streets in Addis Ababa and Hossana;**
2. **Participation of street children in education and life skills at drop-in centres in Addis Ababa and Hossana;**
3. **Reintegration of street children with their families in SNNPR and support to caregivers;**
4. **Participation of vulnerable women in Self Help Groups (SHGs) leading to greater economic security and participation in family and community decision making;**
5. **Establishment of child-led Child Welfare Clubs (CWCs) with a focus on child protection issues; and;**
6. **Community education to promote child protection.**



Based on recommendations from the local authorities, the project targeted three Woredas: Duna, Gibe and Soro, within Hadiya zone. Hossana is the main town in Hadiya zone and is approximately 230km south from Addis Ababa.

The goal of the final evaluation is to build on the mid-term review in order to assess achievements of the project, to guide decision-making on next steps for the project and to generate learning for informing similar projects in future.

## Methodology

The final evaluation is based on ongoing monitoring data (child wellbeing assessments, economic household surveys, community child protection mapping, Most Significant Change stories and annual results reports), as well as primary data collection through specific tools such as focus group discussions with representatives from SHGs and CWCs and key informant interviews with selected government officials, religious and community leaders and other relevant stakeholders. The methodologies applied

involved participation of beneficiaries in the evaluation process so as to hear feedback on the project services and outcomes directly from the project beneficiaries (both children and adults) and major stakeholders (government line offices).

For full details of the methodologies involved please see the full evaluation report, available on the Retrak website.



# Findings

## Drop-in centres and reintegration

- Over the three year project period, 335 children from SNNPR living unsupported on the streets in Addis Ababa and Hossana have realised their rights to services (health care, education/skills training, and psychosocial support); 251 children were reintegrated into a family context, and 633 children received catch-up education and life skills.
- The major cause that pushed children to street life was economic distress. Nevertheless, poverty was not a standalone reason: family disintegration, peer pressure, and lack of awareness of child protection issues were also among the driving factors that pushed children to street life.
- Results of the child wellbeing assessment showed an almost complete elimination of risks and improvement in wellbeing during children's time at the drop-in centres. When comparing children's wellbeing when they are placed back into the care of their family to their wellbeing at follow-up there is again an overall improvement. As measured by the child wellbeing assessments 79% of children at the drop-in centres had improved in access to education and 59% improved in social behaviour. Whilst 89% of reintegrating children showed an overall improvement in wellbeing.
- The drop-in centre is a very effective setup in providing feedback necessary to plan and implement prevention of children leaving their homes and coming to the streets. The child protection mechanisms based on the information gathered has enabled Retrak to actively engage in prevention activities in local Woredas where child migration was rampant.
- The follow-up activities after reintegration were constrained by resource limitation. Results revealed that the percent of children followed-up was lower compared with the achievements in the other activities.

Outcome indicator	Outcome result Y1 - 3 (Oct 2012 - Sept 2015)
<b>Objectives 1-3: Drop-in centres, education and life skills and reintegration</b>	
Over a three year period, <b>395</b> street children living unsupported on the streets realise their rights to services (health care, education/skills training, psycho-social support)	<b>335</b> children from SNNPR previously living on the streets received services, leading to 100% of children showing improvement in wellbeing <sup>1</sup>
Over a three year period, <b>126</b> street children are reintegrated into a family context in SNNPR where they are happy to remain, contribute to family wellbeing and receive holistic care and support	<b>251</b> street children were reintegrated into a family context in SNNPR
Over a three year period, <b>656</b> street children will receive catch-up education classes and life skills in line with national education curriculum and progress by one or more grades.	<b>633</b> street children received catch-up education and life skills, leading to 79% of children improve in access to education and 59% improve in social behaviour as measured by child wellbeing assessments 54% living with one or both parents and 39% with other relatives
Over a three year period, <b>80%</b> of children have improved wellbeing whilst in their family and/or community	<b>89%</b> of reintegrated children showed an improvement in wellbeing

<sup>1</sup> There was an error in calculations when reporting this figure during the mid-term review. Having found the mistake, this result has been amended to match the number of children receiving shelter at the drop-in centres during the life of the project.

## Self Help Groups

- Over the three year project period, 350 women became Self Help Group (SHG) members and participated in savings and loans activities as well as child protection sessions leading to a greater understanding of children's needs and parenting skills and, correspondingly, 66% of their children showing an improvement in parental care.
- Comparison of the results between the two economic surveys with SHG households revealed encouraging results in terms of the amount of savings, which increased more than 200%, in all the Woredas. The proportion of women who took loans from their SHGs has also increased almost consistently across all the Woredas. Increase in savings and loans resulted in increase in food security, and in an increased investment in livestock, especially small ruminants.
- The SHG members are confident of being able to manage their group and sustain working together and supporting each other.
- The officials in all the three Woredas underlined that the SHGs organised by Retrak are much more successful than any of those organised through government offices.
- The members of SHGs have addressed not only their members' economic problems, but also have effectively empowered members to strengthen their social bonds and address their children's wellbeing and education. The SHG members are also supporting other women in the community to form similar SHGs.



**Most Significant Change story: Retrak's Self Help Group helping poor women**

*This is a story of XXX who has seven family members that she supports. She mainly involves in petty trade in bare road line in small town. Previously if she faced challenges she had no saving or had no one to turn to. Her only option was a money lender who lends with exorbitant interest rate. The group members mainly express this loan as “Yechenk Woled” to mean extremely worrisome loan. In one SHG meeting XXX shared her painful experience.*

*“On one occasion my first born got very sick, we visited the local health centre twice but end up with no solution. At last the local clinic referred my boy to hospital for further medication. I had to go to many friends and relatives to borrow money for my son’s medication but it was not easy. Finally, I went to a money lender and gave my only cow as collateral and took 2,000birr. After two months I hardly managed to pay the loan and had to pay 3,200birr by selling our family cow. Following this after a year I heard that Retrak has launched the SHG approach in my town. I was the first woman to register. I was serious and used to attend all the concept sharing meetings. Then I decided to actively start weekly saving. After certain period, I saved 200birr and was able to borrow 400birr from the group and started some petty trade in my small town. From this borrowed money I was able to earn 800birr gross profit after four months. I paid my loan with 4% interest and finished my loan. The interest I paid is*

*insignificant compared to the money lenders’ unreasonably high interest rate. After a while I was able to save 3,200birr. Consequently, I took for the second time 6,400birr loan. This happened since there was no other person who wanted to take loan when I requested the second time. I am working and paying this as well and left with only one month loan to pay. I am so thankful to Retrak’s community worker who is teaching us every week and encouraging us.”*

*XXX starts each day with hope. On a good day she earns a net profit of 100 to 150birr. When business is low, her profit sometimes goes down to 50 to 75birr. Even in such days she is more efficient and work without worry since the interest of the SHG is reasonable (which is 4% per month) and payable compared with the money lenders. She is happy to refund comfortably the group loan. As she expressed it “after all am helping and capacitating my own group”. Her success is in no small part due to her own tireless hard work, but she also attributes it to the care and advice she receives from community workers.*

*XXX is currently helping her six children to continue their school. Her dream for her children is to become educated and live a healthy life. She hopes that one day she will have a big, permanent supermarket in one of the busy roads of her small town.*

Outcome indicator	Outcome result Y1 - 3 (Oct 2012 - Sept 2015)
<b>Objective 4: Self Help Groups</b>	
Over a three year period, <b>308</b> caregivers gain knowledge and skills in parenting, child development and child protection	<b>350</b> SHG members have participated in sessions leading to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>66%</b> of children in SHG households show an improvement in parental care wellbeing</li> <li>• A greater understanding of children’s needs and improvement in parenting skills, as mentioned in many most significant change stories</li> </ul>
Over a three year period, <b>225</b> women and their families ( <b>675</b> children) have an increased income	<b>350</b> women (and <b>1,584</b> children under their care) participated in SHGs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>81%</b> of women reported increased income</li> <li>• <b>99%</b> reported increased savings and 99% have plans to increase their income.</li> <li>• <b>100%</b> women reported ability to save, which was a <b>3%</b> increase from what was reported during 2014 survey.</li> </ul> To date a total of <b>281,563</b> Birr has been saved across the SHGs and <b>648,597</b> Birr has been issued in loans.
Over a three year period, <b>80%</b> of children have improved wellbeing whilst in their family and/or community	<b>98%</b> of children in the community showed an improvement in wellbeing
Over a three year period, <b>308</b> caregivers and their families have improved wellbeing	Of the <b>325</b> women who completed the CSI, 93% caregivers show an improvement in wellbeing





### Child Wellbeing Clubs

- Over the three year project period, nearly 300 children participated in Child Wellbeing Clubs (CWCs) and led peer-to-peer education which reached over 13,000 children. As a result the children reported a greater awareness of child protection issues and ability to influence positive responses to risks, often through informal channels. The schools reported lower dropout rates.
- The CWCs conduct meetings about once in a week and then the school arranges a convenient time to enable the club to convey its messages to the school community. The CWCs raise awareness on child protection, labour and trafficking and traffic rules and regulations, as well as monitoring children dropping out from school and mobilising resources to support orphans.
- From among different school clubs, such as HIV/AIDS education, sports, environment, science, etc, the CWCs are the most active at all the schools visited for this evaluation.
- The CWCs are actively working to educate the school communities, and the CWCs' activities are recognised as best practice for replication to other schools in the Woredas.
- The CWCs' activities have significantly contributed to the reduction in the school dropout rates. Data from one school in Gibe Woreda revealed that the dropout rate has reduced significantly during the last three years, this was attributed to the impact of the CWC at the school.
- The current strategy of fundraising is that Club members take the lead to contribute money and all for both teachers and students to raise funds to support children who are economically unable to cover school expenses.
- The school community, and in some occasions the communities outside the school, have appreciated the role the CWCs are taking during special events in educating the communities with drama and songs regarding child protection issues.
- This evaluation has shown that the CWCs are socially sustainable as there exists widespread acceptance of the Clubs among head teachers, schools and communities, this is likely to ensure their long-term sustainability.

**Most Significant Change story: A model of change**

*In 2013, I was just 13 years old. At that time, my parents had no the capacity to fulfil my needs of scholastic materials. In Hamola Kebele, a place where I live, many children go to Addis Ababa in search of job. When they come back to their family every year for holidays, they bring different stuffs. One day, my mother saw two of my girl friends who dropped out of school and went to Addis Ababa, came back for holiday with food, oil and kerosene for their parents. Then, she said to me ‘those two girls are at your age, but look what they have done for their parents and to themselves; they came back dressed well and they also brought food, oils and kerosene’. After I heard this, I felt sad and decided to go to Addis. Then, I asked my friends about the city and they told me that if I drop out of school and go with them they can get me employed. Therefore, I went with them to Addis and as they promised, they got me a job in a household. However, things did not go the way I expected. I started missing my family and most of all, I couldn’t cope with the burden I carried. I always woke up at 6am and work non-stop until 10pm. After a year, that is in September, 2014, I went back to my family for a holiday. Fortunately, after I arrived there my school friends told me that they were celebrating a school*

*opening day and the school’s Child Wellbeing Club members were showing dramas, short plays and presenting artistic literatures. They invited me to join them and so, I went with them. The drama was titled ‘the missing child’, which was pretty much similar to my story. While I was attending the drama, I started crying because it just looked like I told them my story and they were playing it on stage. After the programme was finished, I went to speak with the club members and their coordinator. I told them that I want to restart my education and asked them if I could be a member of the Child Wellbeing Club. They were very much happy about my decision and helped me to get registered and also they accepted my request for membership.*

*Currently, I am continuing my education from where I stopped, grade four. With hard work and dedication I stood first from my class and the school awarded me for being a ‘good role model’.*

*Retrak helped me to have a very good understanding about child exploitation and the negative impact of child migration at early ages. I have also a better knowledge about child wellbeing, child protection, the risks of child trafficking and street life.*

Outcome indicator	Outcome result Y1 - 3 (Oct 2012 - Sept 2015)
<b>Objective 5: Child Wellbeing Clubs (CWCs)</b>	
Over a three year period, <b>20% increase</b> in the number of children reporting child protection issues following CWC guidance	Children report a greater awareness of child protection issues and of being able to influence positive responses to risks, often through informal channels.
Over a three year period, <b>20% increase</b> in children completing at least one year of formal education or training	Schools with CWCs report a reduction in school dropout rates

## Community Education

- Over the three year project period, 812 community members participated in community education workshops, which led to a greater understanding of children's needs and improvement in parenting skills and to 140 children being rescued from traffickers by police and bus workers.
- From among the several NGOs operating in their area, Retrak's community interventions have contributed in changing behaviour of the community to an extraordinary degree, this has been recorded by government office evaluations on the role of NGOs in their area.
- The interviewed stakeholders have conveyed that they are fully positioned to have a strong role as child protection advocates. Besides this remarkable achievement pertaining to the community education, building a strong child protection network at a Woreda level is essential so that duty bearers are held to account.

### **Most Significant Change story: Protecting children from traffickers**

*My name is XXX. I work as a bus station conductor in Duna Woreda. Since I started working at the bus-station, on average, I have seen people trafficking five children every day. Since these children were not with their biological parents, I and my friends at the bust station used to talk among ourselves about what would happen to these children. We speculated things about where they might be going and with whom. In these discussions, my friends*

*told me that some of the children were going to Addis Ababa to start a shoe shining business and some others were moving to get a daily labour through brokers. At that time, I had a positive feeling that these children were going for good reason assuming that they might go somewhere and do something to change their life and then return to their family.*

*Nevertheless, one day we were invited by Retrak's Community Development Worker to an awareness raising training. The training was about preventing child trafficking. The trainer gave us a very good insight about what it means to be a child, why children are leaving their family and the challenges they face when they depart from their family and community. I learned a lot from the training and my attitude has changed ever since. Therefore, I made a personal decision and commitment to stop the children from being trafficked, abused and exploited.*

*Two months later, while I was on duty at the bus station, I saw six children coming out of a bus one by one and went to a nearby cafeteria. I followed them closely and I asked one of these children who was buying them tea and why? The child told me that there was a man in the cafeteria who was taking them to Addis Ababa to get them hired by employers and that is the reason why he was doing this. As I was talking with the child, the trafficker came out of the cafeteria and started running. I chased him for about 500 meters, shouting for the help while pursuing him. Other people who heard me helped me and caught him. Then, I handed over him to the police for legal actions.*

Outcome indicator	Outcome result Y1 - 3 (Oct 2012 - Sept 2015)
<b>Objective 6: Community education</b>	
<p>Over a three year period, <b>20% increase</b> in the number of children reporting child protection issues following CWC guidance</p>	<p>Community members report greater awareness of child protection issues, especially the importance of positive parenting skills. In addition there is greater use of formal child protection mechanisms for dealing with incidences. (reported in Community Child Protection Mapping)</p>
<p>Over a three year period <b>450</b> community members gain knowledge and skills in parenting, child development and child protection.</p>	<p><b>812</b> community members have participated in workshops, this has led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A greater understanding of children’s needs and improvement in parenting skills, as mentioned in many Most Significant Change stories and in the Community Child Protection Mapping.</li> <li>• <b>140</b> children has been rescued from trafficker and one trafficker has been prosecuted. A reduction in child trafficking has been also reported in Most Significant Change stories.</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

The evaluation of the drop-in centres revealed that the best interest of the child are maintained across all services, with case-by-case, flexible and participatory consideration to ensure children's welfare and safety. There are also very effective systems to monitor the improvements in the wellbeing of reintegrated children and their families and to gather feedback to plan and implement prevention activities.

The SHGs have accomplished remarkable achievements in addressing economic wellbeing of households, strengthening social cohesion and improving child wellbeing, thus ultimately paving the way to prevent children separating to go to the street. Retrak's approach of organising SHGs without giving hand-outs, unlike the common practice among most NGOs, has been shown to be effective. In addition the

community education and CWCs have made a tremendous contribution to improve the level of awareness and develop positive attitudes towards child protection among the community and the major stakeholders.

The approach adopted by the project is undoubtedly the best any project of this magnitude could have adopted. In particular, the involvement of local stakeholders, such as the office Women and Children's Affairs and the police, is critical in making the child protection interventions work on a small and large scale. Overall, this pilot project has had remarkable success against all its objectives. All projects activities were implemented effectively and generated outcomes worthy of scaling up and replicating in other communities.



# Recommendations

The evaluation has shown that Retrak Ethiopia's project has registered successes in the area of providing services to the children on the street and improving child protection in target communities. Bearing in mind that three years is a short period to register such tremendous achievements, it is recommended that the project be replicated to other Woredas where child migration and trafficking are prevalent and the duration of the project at the current Woredas be extended to allow it to be scaled up to more rural Kebeles and to build local capacity for sustainability.

Specifically it is recommended that Retrak considers:

- **Holistic support to children aged below 14 years of age**, including provision of meals during the weekend to prevent these children from being exposed to child labour inappropriate to their age.
- **Establishing referral links** in Hossana, to allow children who choose not to reintegrate back to their families to be referred for vocational training, as happens in Addis Ababa.
- **Exploring potential to collaborate with other organisations** to provide some of the services linked to the drop-in centre, to allow Retrak to focus on facilitation of core activities of reintegrating children and gathering information on the nature and pattern of children coming to the streets to strengthen prevention activities.
- **Strengthening the drop-in centres** with further funding so as to ensure the project's continuation in the same way it is being done. It is too early to consider an exit strategy as the work has yet to become consolidated, particularly on the prevention side, so there is still need to reach out to children on the street.
- **Strengthening follow-up of reintegrated children**, as this was not successfully implemented especially where families are not located within intervention areas, due to limitation of resources. A telephone based follow-up strategy should be designed for children reintegrated outside the operational areas.
- **Collaborative support for SHGs with stakeholders** to build on the strong roots of forming SHGs and pooling savings to allow utilisation of these savings for building microenterprises. This requires considerable support from line offices and other stakeholders (such as Women and Children's Affairs, micro and small businesses, cooperatives, and microfinance institutions) with Retrak monitoring activities and providing of technical support whenever the need arises.
- **Production of documentary films** to motivate and empower newly formed SHGs and to aid scale up of new SHGs at rural and urban Kebeles.
- **Strengthening school based activities that create spaces for children to freely participate in child protection interventions** across the remaining primary schools. This could attract the attention of children and schools to allow further education on child protection.
- **Encourage greater girls' participation in CWCs** to ensure even levels of participation.
- **Empowering the CWCs to generate their own funds** through public shows and competitions to ensure long-term sustainability of the Clubs.
- **Increasing project duration** to allow partners to develop and strengthen their capacities and competencies in order to scale up components of the project within the context of their Woredas.
- **Focusing on building the capacity of stakeholders** (such as Office of Education, Women and Children Affairs, police, micro and small business, and others) so they can scale up and replicate the project activities, and lay the basis for sustainability of the project outcomes.



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Retrak, Metropolitan House, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 7AZ, UK  
**Telephone:** +44 (0)161 485 6685 **Email:** mailbox@retrak.org **Web:** www.retrak.org

Registered charity number 1122799. Registered company number 6424507

