

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

Youth street connection, youth living with disability and inclusive policies and practice, and youth justice were three intersecting themes of the National Youth Seminar co-hosted by the research team with CHADET and the Federal Ministry of Women, Children and Youth in March 2019. Street connection issues, policy and practice messages are outlined in the Key Findings above, page 2.

Youth Living with Disability

In rural Fogera and Hetosa youth with disability reported struggles in school due to physical inaccessibility, classroom marginalisation, teachers' lack of awareness and peer bullying. For example, Yeneneh, a young man from Fogera spoke of problems at school due to physical disability, frustration that he wasn't included in local government meetings and that services were inaccessible.

Youth from rural areas want to migrate like their peers but feel trapped because of their disability. Some sought traditional healing and herbal medicine to cure ill health and disability, and all talked about lack of access to other medical services. In rural communities some reported discrimination and name calling: *"Some people in the neighbourhood insult me. They refer to me as senkalla [crippled]. I get angry with them. I feel bad about it. However, I often listen to such insults and keep quiet. My father also told me that I should expect that such things can happen to me."* (Betehon, young woman, aged 23 years, Fogera)

If youth with disability move from rural into urban areas, they often lose social and family contact and feel isolated, although few manage to link up with peers. They find services hard to access or not inclusive, and barriers such as lacking identification cards or school certificates for life in the city. Disability can also affect households and people who are non-disabled: it is important to see disability as an issue that is cross-cutting and how inclusive policies can benefit others as well as youth living with disability.

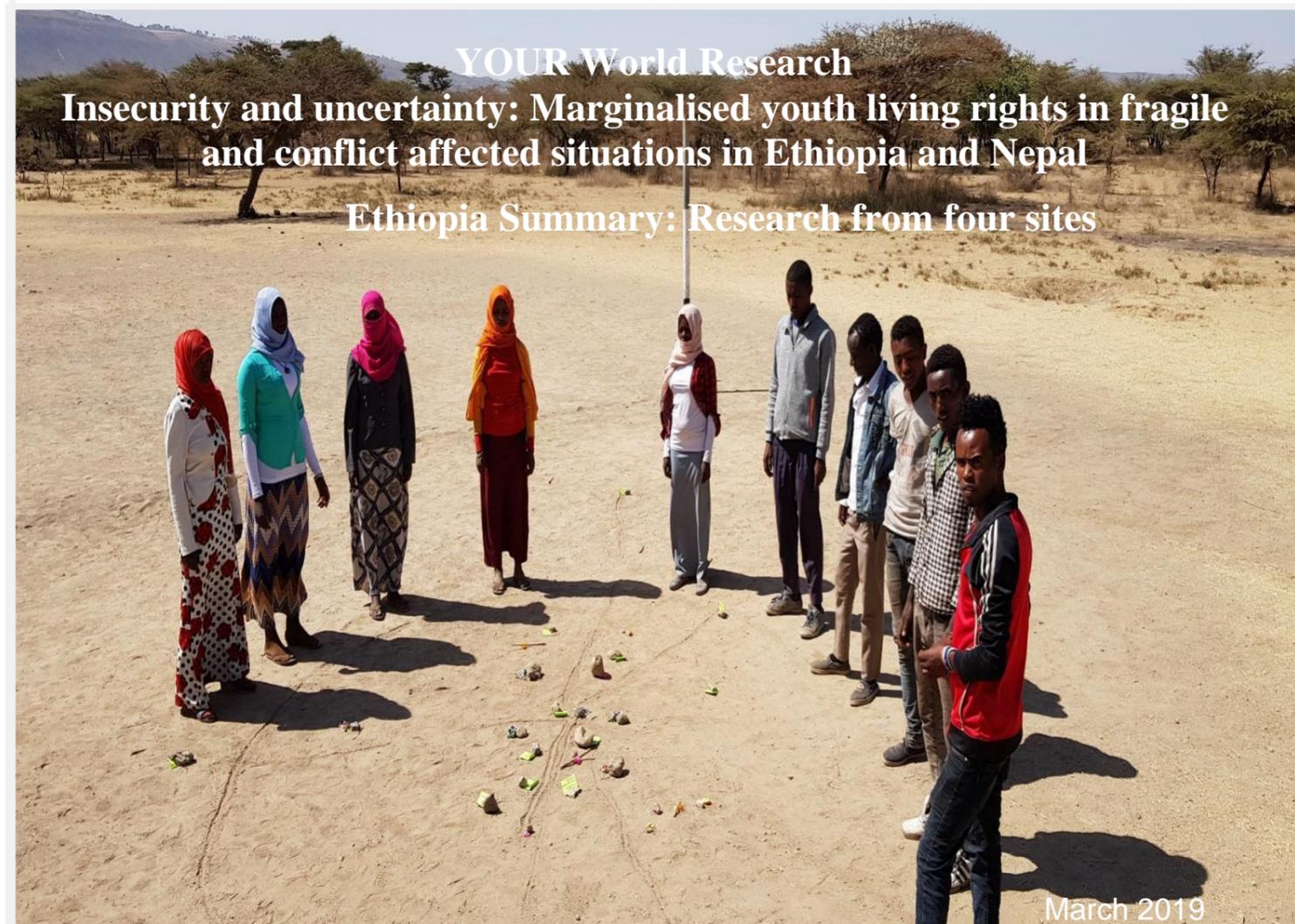
Youth Justice

In a more holistic consideration of welfare, protection and wellbeing for youth, YOUR World Research recognises the importance of strategies that support youth in terms of diversion from criminal activities and incarceration, and ensures their protection in vulnerable situations and on the streets. Some marginalised youth in rural areas admit to small petty crimes, for example stealing money from relatives and then feeling ashamed to go home. Once living and working connected to the streets, some find their only options for making a living may involve criminal activity, often exploitative. In rural and urban areas, marginalised youth may spend time in liquor and khat houses, and some report they feel peer pressure to get involved in petty crime and drug and substance use.

Policy recommendations include mediation between youth and families or employers where petty crime has caused rupture in positive relationships, and services for supporting youth diversion including through alternative livelihoods. Many young people feel they just want to make a living and turn to illegal activities only under extreme pressure to earn income and survive. They raise issues of exploitative work, the need for support for informal sector businesses, and access for marginalised youth to services. Marginalised youth often face discrimination and are vulnerable to criminalisation without evidence, or to being drawn into illegal activities. Some young people report violence from some policemen, even if innocent or for minor misdemeanours or petty crimes.

"I have confidence in the fact that street children have minimal involvement in crimes especially theft. There are some youth who live in the area who come to the bus station for robbery and fraud as if it's their legal work. They commit crime and go away immediately. The policemen come and point their finger on us. We will be arrested and suffer on something we don't have any involvement. Youth from the surroundings have somewhere to hide. We stay here as we don't have places to hide." (Zenabu, young man aged 22 years, Addis Ketema)

Some youth appreciate community members and police are trying to work with them to minimise crime in their area. *"The security condition of the vicinity was fragile before. Now the community is working very closely with the police. The youth are part of the effort to minimize criminal activities in the area. The local administration allows the youth to work in temporary parking lots in the evening. The youth also patrol the neighbourhood while watching over the cars."* (Yaye, young man aged 26 years, Addis Ketema)



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Youth Uncertainty Rights (YOUR) World Research has carried out detailed qualitative and participatory research with some of the most marginalised young people across eight fragile environments in Ethiopia and Nepal. YOUR World Research shows that, when we include youth by listening to their views, a picture emerges of creativity and innovative ideas in the face of significant challenges.

The research took place between 2016-2019, and has generated new knowledge about how marginalised youth perceive, navigate, negotiate and respond to uncertainty. By building on youth strategies the research illuminates our understanding of youth realities and rights, and how to support them to confront their feelings of marginalisation and find pathways out of poverty.

In Ethiopia, the national team worked with over 500 marginalised youth, including 250 in-depth and focused case studies. Four sites in each country provide evidence from youth in rural fragile earthquake or drought affected fragile environments, conflict situations and of young lives on the streets of capital cities and smaller towns. Young people also provide illustrations of their journeys and reasons for migration in search of alternative futures.

In Ethiopia the research sites were: Addis Ketema to work in slums and with street connected youth; Hetosa in the drought affected zone; Woreta a transit town for migrants; and rural kebele's of Fogera Woreta, from where young people migrate to nearby towns.

Key Findings

Traditionally marginalisation in Ethiopia has been thought of as being located on the peripheries of the country but YOUR World Research has found young people experiencing marginalisation at the centre of communities. In the research, having worked with some of the main ethnic groups including Oromo and Amhara, young people have helped to reconceptualise our understandings of their everyday lives. They show that marginalisation for them includes experiences such as having to drop out of school, take up exploitative or uncertain employment, face a necessity to migrate internally and internationally - sometimes without success, through the consequences of abuse and discrimination in their own families or in the communities they come from or travel to, or in being affected by HIV. Young people have found that their marginalisation is further exacerbated since, because of their age and other status (such as gender and disability) they are often not listened to and their concerns are overlooked or ignored, so their problems are not addressed.

Three main areas of findings from the research are: formal education failing the most marginalised and the need to support and protect them in work in the informal sector; the intensification of migration out of fragile areas including internationally; and the need to address street connections and situations for youth including issues of conflict with the law and substance use. In each of these main areas young people creatively navigate uncertainty and offer innovative solutions and suggestions for support.

Relevant Education, Employment and the Informal Sector

Across all four sites, formal education was found to have failed many marginalised young people because of its lack of relevance for their lives and circumstances, costs and pressures of combining domestic work and school. Many had dropped out of school or failed national exams (at 8th and 10th grade, a turning point for vocational and further education). Instead of seeing formal education as a solution to finding a job, being able to meet expectations of adults and support their families, young people see successful international migrants as role models.

“As there are no educated role models in the Town and there are many uneducated youth. I lost interest in formal education.” (Ayalew, young man, aged 19 years, Woreta)

Young people continue to migrate seasonally and internally in search of work but increasingly seek alternative and creative employment in the informal sector or through international migration. Sometimes their attempts to find creative ways to make money end in exploitative or even unlawful work which they feel ashamed about and try to hide from families. Youth desperately want support to develop their skills and for setting up informal enterprises so that they can find alternative ways to support their families by staying in the country. Even when they have tried setting up enterprises with peer groups, when they have reached urban destinations through internal migration, they often find difficulties and feel they are working against the odds. For example, they meet barriers from authorities to working on the streets or face problems from adults who discriminate against them if they are street connected.

“I was forced to get married when I was a child. I dropped out of school when I was in grade six. I wanted to continue my study even after marriage. But my husband refused to let me do that.” (Fatuma, young woman, aged 25 years, Hetosa.)

Internal and International Migration

Seasonal and internal migration is often a main feature of the lives of marginalised youth and families across Ethiopia. In one of the research sites, Hetosa, a fragile environment combined with threats of early marriage and abduction of young women have increased youth migration as an escape out of the area. Young people are also increasingly migrating from Fogera in the northern Amhara district in search of employment in plantations in the north of the country. Small towns like Woreta become transit ‘corridor towns’ with increasing numbers of youth seeking alternative futures so that they can provide for their families. But the services in these towns cannot support the numbers of youth seeking work, and many become street connected and then turn to substance abuse when their endeavours in informal sector are not successful.

The lure of international migration has been increasing because of limited opportunities and lack of support in the informal sector for the most marginalised young people in urban centres. This may now change with increasing space given to listen to youth and developments in youth policy in the country after recent political changes.

“The problem is that the unemployment and the ambition of the youth are really opposite. The youth aspire of changing their life immediately rather than through process which makes them pursue migration” (Belay, young man, aged 18 years, Woreta)

Street Connection and Substance Use

Youth who migrate to urban sites of Woreta and Addis Ketema do so with the best of intentions and aspirations to find different ways to meet adult expectations and to support their families. Far from breaking family and traditional community bonds, they want to feel proud of what they can contribute.

Many urban marginalised youth have grown up in towns or cities or migrated to them in search of better futures. In the research they told their life-stories which resulted in them ending up connected to the streets. For some this involved their escape from abuse and discrimination within their families and communities. Others felt heavy expectations to provide for families in the face of high unemployment, landlessness, fragility in environment or simply that they sought to emulate their role models who are successful migrants. On the street young men and women can feel insecure, out of control of their lives and uncertain how to earn a living or just survive day-to-day. Some youth living and working on the street find it hard to survive on low incomes and turn to exploitative work, for example commercial sex work, and/or the use of substances to relieve their difficulties

“After I started working as a commercial sex worker, my life became all the same. The payment is very minimal and couldn’t bring change way of life. Rather my life became a routine and boring one. This business made my life certain. I usually woke up in the middle of the day, drink coffee and chew chat and when I have customers I will work.” (Kokebe, young woman aged 24 years from Addis Ketema)

Once young people are on the street, services need to take youth perspectives into account to engage with and find ways to work with the most marginalised, and to ensure provision is non-discriminatory and inclusive. Employment support in the informal sector could offer alternatives to street connected youth and their families. If young people return to communities having not succeeded in employment or migration, mediation may be important in mending broken family bonds so that the youth can feel that they belong.

What We Did

Methodology co-constructed

The research was youth centred. It was conducted by national teams based at national partner non-governmental organisations and national universities. The UK, Ethiopian and Nepalese teams met during inception, analysis and writing-up to share ideas and approaches across countries. The PI and Co-I provided ongoing training, mentoring and support to the team to be involved in co-construction throughout the process. Initial translations and understandings of insecurity, uncertainty and marginalisation, and the most appropriate methods to use in the further phases of the research, were piloted and further co-constructed with marginalised young people early on in the process. Two cross cutting themes - strategies and interventions, what helps and doesn’t help in times of uncertainty – help provide insight for policy makers.

Participants

Marginalised young women and men, and in Nepal gender fluid young people, participated in the research. The term youth and young people have been used interchangeably in the research and the team decided on the UN age range of 15 to 25 years, despite national definitions extending to higher age ranges. The participant sample and criteria of marginalisation and vulnerability were developed through the inception and piloting phase of the research project. Snowballing was used to reach the most marginalised as defined by other marginalised youth. Participants were selected also to maintain a balance of gender, ethnicity/ caste (depending on locality) and to be inclusive of youth with disability, young people who had experienced abuse, those in different family and working situations or other circumstances of exclusion, poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation. A youth profile was developed to monitor and report on the diversity of young people in the 250 detailed case studies. The perspectives of over 100 adults and 60 broader stakeholders were also collected in small group discussions in each research site and with policy makers nationally.

Phases of youth centered research

YOUR World Research, funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, was conducted in five phases.

Phase 1 selected national teams and co-constructed the research.

Phase 2 piloted and co-constructed with youth. Applied creative and engaging participatory and visual methods were developed. These included mapping, rivers of life, photo narrative, timeline, seasonal map, youth led walk, network and support diagrams. Youth profiles were designed and marginalised youth found through snowballing. Ongoing analysis was informed through team observations, interviews with adults and broader stakeholders, and the continued reference to the audio and visual materials created with young people.

Phase 3 conducted over a one-year period, included 150 in-depth case study interviews that illuminated how youth navigate and negotiate uncertainty in different dimensions of their lives. Team thematic analysis, alongside the use of qualitative software, led to key findings and identified themes for further exploration.

Phase 4 followed up these themes with an additional 100 young people. Focused case studies explored issues and youth strategies in small groups across the research sites using creative, moving and participatory methods. Verification and dialogue with local decision-makers and service providers was carried out in regional/ provincial youth seminars, reaching out to and engaging with more youth locally.

Phase 5 focused on national processes of research uptake with NGO and university partners and national policy makers and practitioners. Although not initially planned YOUR World Research National Youth Seminars were supported through additional funding in response to the interest of national and international decision-makers and researchers. Throughout the process YOUR World Research has been advised through national and international reference groups of policy makers and academics.

Partnership

The team worked with a national reference group and with national and local partners throughout to both access the most marginalised, follow up on ethical protocols and create impact through ongoing commitment and action (partners listed on back).



Young people drawing open map



Youth led walk in rural Hetosa



Discussion with return migrants



Problem tree with street connected youth