

## Key Messages for Policy and Practice

### *Marginalised young people's living rights to education and protection from abuse, violence, and exploitative labour must be implemented*

Most marginalised young people in rural Kebeles of Fogera Woreda are employed informally from their childhood onwards. Families with small plots of land use their children's labour for diversifying their income. Young women are mostly employed as domestic workers for economically better off families in their community, whereas young men are employed to herd cattle. Those young people with an experience of domestic and farm work reported violence from employers, denial of primary education and exploited by a heavy workload with minimal pay. **Youth Recommendations:** develop a system and services for children's and young people's living rights to education, protection from abuse and violence, and protection from exploitative labour to be upheld, supported and implemented. Services need to support children and young people and their family relationships, and to ensure their safety in domestic work in rural area.

### *Develop new strategies for the access to, quality and relevance of formal education for marginalised rural young people*

Marginalised young people in Fogera Woreda reported their parents' reluctance to send children to school because of need for their labour. Many youth had to drop out for varied reasons including pressure to marry young, unaffordability of formal education, limited access to library and availability of reading books. Secondary schools are located in towns, so youth from poor rural family backgrounds must engage in informal work to cover costs of living there. But combining work and school is a challenge, and gives limited study time outside school. Youth who manage to combine work with schooling, still fail to score a pass mark in the National Exam in grade 10. This National Exam is a source of considerable uncertainty and reported to be a barrier in young people's school journey, but formal education is also seen as irrelevant. School lessons are thought to lack appropriate content or applicability to young people's daily activities. **Youth Recommendations:** Secondary schools need to be built in rural villages because moving to town is unaffordable. Strategies for overcoming marginalised young people's failures in grade 10 National Exam need to be developed to include consideration of marginalised youth living contexts, access and quality of education provided in rural areas. Vocational education and training needs to be developed as well as academic guidance as part of the formal education system.

### *Create sustainable off-farming livelihood opportunities for marginalised youth in rural contexts*

Agriculture is a primary means of livelihood in rural Fogera despite land shortages and landlessness amongst marginalised young people and their families. Since they depend on subsistence farming, there is a significant and urgent need for alternative off-farming livelihood opportunities amongst the youth and their families. **Youth Recommendation:** Expand alternative and sustainable off-farming livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

#### UK Team

**Dr. Vicky Johnson**, Principal Investigator, Goldsmiths  
**Dr. Andy West**, Senior Research Fellow, Goldsmiths  
**Signe Gosmann**, Research Officer/ Fellow, Goldsmiths  
**Prof. Andrew Church**, Adviser, University of Brighton

#### Ethiopian Team

**Dr. Melese Getu**, National Research Lead, Addis Ababa University,  
**Amid Ahmed**, Debre Markos University  
**Milki Getachew**, PhD Student, Goldsmiths

#### Nepal Team

**Dr. Sumon Kamal Tuladhar**, National Research Lead  
**Sabitra Neupane**, Home Net Nepal  
**Shubendra Man Shrestha**, PhD Student, Goldsmiths

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#### Partners in Ethiopia

##### Addis Ababa University CHADET

Anannia Admassu  
(Managing Director)

##### Local Facilitators

Adem Desalegn  
Aemero Tilahun

## YOUR World Research

Insecurity and Uncertainty: Marginalised Youth Living Rights in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations in Nepal and Ethiopia

### Research from Fogera Ethiopia



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University of Brighton

Youth Uncertainty Rights (YOUR) World Research is a large scale qualitative study conducted in fragile and conflict affected urban and rural areas of Ethiopia and Nepal. The research worked with the most marginalised youth across eight purposively selected research sites in both countries. The research has employed participatory and innovative research methods to understand how and vulnerable youth are navigating and negotiating uncertainty.

YOUR World Research generates new knowledge about youth understandings of uncertainty, violence, poverty and rights in post-conflict and fragile environments. This further provides insights into how to support and sustain pathways out of poverty for street connected and marginalised youth.

YOUR World Research has worked with over 65 young people in the rural Kebeles of Fogera Woreda in Amhara Regional State, investigating how young people's perceptions of uncertainty, and their pathways out of poverty, are shaped and intersected by the socio-cultural and physical contexts. This summary provides an overview of the main findings from Fogera.

## Main Findings

### The formal education system is failing marginalised young people who then turn to migration

- Many marginalised young people in rural villages of Fogera Woreda mentioned school dropout and failure as key experiences in their lives. Reasons included late school enrolment, unaffordability of formal education, community expectations and pressure to marry young, heavy household workload and lack of study time, absence of nearby secondary schools as well as failure in national examinations. Many also described problems in combining work (both household and informal work) with schooling.
- Although young people whose national exam results are too low to join public higher learning institutions often seek alternatives to attend private colleges by paying tuition fees, this is not possible for marginalised youth. Many young people in Fogera Woreda have farmer parents who cannot afford to pay for private college fees, so instead they look to migration to urban places for work as a key strategy.

*My parents decided that I should get married at the age of 13. With a lot of struggle I was able to complete grade 8. Then I had to move to Woreta Town to attend grade 9 and 10. The challenges in Woreta were too many... As I couldn't prepare myself for the national school leaving exam well, I scored a grade point average of 2.14 which was not good enough for me to join the preparatory school. Only 12 students out of a total of 42 passed the exam. I came back to my parents. There is no training or other alternatives for those of us who failed in 10<sup>th</sup> grade school leaving national exams... (Martha, a young women, aged 19, 016).*

### Marginalised young people in rural villages are exploited in work in the informal sector

- Work in the informal sector is the alternative for families and their children who live in a certainty of poverty. Despite land shortages and landlessness, agriculture is a primary means of livelihood for many households. But because it is subsistence farming, many families negotiate the employment of their young children to better-off households to herd cattle, engage in farming or in domestic work. Some young people reported experiences of abuse from their employers in this informal work, and some described prevailing abusive behaviour from their employers. These young people are restricted from going to school and have a heavy workload with minimal pay.

*As my parents didn't have land, they made me to get employed informally at the age of 10. I worked for 10 years in 10 different households. My parents were the one who negotiate in my behalf with landlords. I didn't get an opportunity to go to school. I rather work day and night for my employers with minimal payment. Besides, if the owners plant onion, it would be a very difficult task for me. I would be working day and night till harvesting. I would be resting once in a while on holydays... (Maru, a young man, aged 20, 137).*

### Landlessness and limited alternative work opportunities cause problems for young people's social transitions to adulthood, including work, divorce, migration

- The certainty of poverty in Fogera, exacerbated by landlessness and the absence of off-farming livelihood opportunities, has created a barrier for many young people to attain the social attributes of adulthood. Adult status is locally attributed by getting married, having the capacity to support their family economically and start an independent life. Since land is an essential resource that young people are assumed to inherit upon marriage, many youth reported their uncertainty about the future because of shortage of land and poor family background. Shortages of land and alternative employment present a particular problem in rural Kebeles of Fogera where land is regarded as an essential asset for marriage. This has resulted in a range of problems, including divorce among young married couples, and also led to migration.

*My parents didn't have land and it was very difficult for them to raise six children. My elder siblings started working in their childhood to make money. I grew up helping my parents in domestic chores. I used to herd cattle too. I got married at the age of 15 without my consent. My husband didn't have land. I decided to divorce him as I didn't want to have another child in that situation. I have a 9 years old daughter. I faced rejection for divorcing my husband. I rather insisted on ending that relationship. I am now a single mother and make money by selling local alcoholic drinks (Mastewal, a young woman, aged 24, 135).*



Young woman drawing their community in Fogera



Physical resource mapping with youth



Young women writing up and ranking their problems



Young men writing up and ranking their problems

## What We Did

### Methodology

YOUR World research has co-constructed its data collection methods with marginalised young people, exploring their perceptions of uncertainty, place and space, mobility and migration, transition and growing up, self/others, autonomy and relationships, and conflict and environmental crisis. Two cross cutting themes - strategies and interventions, what helped and didn't help in times of uncertainty - provided insight for policy makers. Participatory, creative and moving methods were used, and data was drawn from multiple sources including direct observations, interviews, physical mapping, and audio-visual materials. Researchers spent time on-site interacting with the people.

### Research site

**Fogera Woreda** (District) is located in northern Ethiopia, South Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region. Woreta town is the administrative center of Fogera Woreda. The Woreda has 28 rural and 5 urban Kebeles. The Woreda population was estimated at 245,251 (ECSA, 2011) of which 51% were male and 49% female. The Woreda is largely inhabited by the Amhara ethnic group. Most of the people are Orthodox Christian.



### Participants of the study

Researchers worked with 30 of the most marginalized youth aged 15 – 24, taking care to reach a gender balance in the sampling. The participant sample and criteria of marginalisation and vulnerability were developed through the inception and piloting phase of the project. Snowballing was used to reach the most and coding system was developed to monitor and report on the diversity of the young people in the case studies. Participants from Fogera were predominantly from a single ethnicity and religion as is representative for the area. Guiding questions were developed and used to collect information from the young participants. In addition to the voices of young people, adults and stakeholders perspectives on the situation of youth is incorporated.

### Research

The research was conducted in five phases, with a qualitative approach and applied creative and engaging participatory and visual methods. These included mapping, rivers of life, photo narratives, timelines, seasonal maps, youth led walks, network and support diagrams, which helped to reveal young people's perspectives on the complexities of their lives. These methods enabled in-depth investigation of how uncertainty affects the lives of young people and how in turn they seek strategies to shape their rights and change their contexts. The case studies show how marginalised youth experience intersecting aspects of poverty, ethnicity, religion, disability, education.