

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

Three key areas for development of policy and practice involve addressing substance abuse, youth unemployment, migration, and protection from exploitation and violation of rights.

Address substance misuse by establishing relevant support, prevention and rehabilitation services

There is widespread use and abuse of *khat*, alcohol, *shisha* and other substances among youth in Woreta. This has led to concerns among young people and a broader public outcry over the consequent range of serious social, economic and health problems involved.

Youth recommendations: formulation of a national policy that focuses on a range of support, prevention and rehabilitation measures at local and community levels. These should include:

Support measures such as the establishment of community-based intervention and outreach services in consultation with young people, with proactive engagement of young people and stakeholders including families, schools, school clubs and friendship networks, and communities, *Iddirs* (burial associations), religious institutions and with *Kebele* (local government) administration in towns.

Prevention measures including work through community-based engagement that also focuses on the excessive alcohol consumption and the regulation of under-age alcoholic consumption.

Rehabilitation measures including context-specific social support, and local engagement including with friends, family, neighbours and community as appropriate through outreach services. Peer and professional counselling services should be provided.

Address problems of youth unemployment and casual work

High unemployment rates and corrupt practices force many marginalised young people into insecure, exploitative informal and casual work without access to social services and where their rights are violated.

Youth recommendations: The problems of corrupt practices, lack of employment opportunities, and casual work exploitation need to be addressed. The problems of corrupt practices must be monitored and dealt with by government including at local levels. Appropriate training and employment opportunities for young people should be devised, developed and provided for marginalised youth. Youth informal work should be recognised and valued. Discrimination, abuse and exploitation in casual work and the informal sector needs to be identified and regional government take measures for appropriate services required to protect rights and to enable and ensure access to social services.

Address problems of rural youth unemployment

Increasing rates of rural-urban migration aggravates problems of youth unemployment and levels of casual work in towns like Woreta.

Youth recommendations: Increase provisions for and value rural youth employment. For example, increased investment in agro-processing and through this encourage production of surplus vegetables in existing irrigated and rain-fed agricultural practice which has potential to benefit farmers and create jobs. Appropriate training and employment opportunities for young people should be devised, developed and provided for marginalised youth. Provide appropriate services for protection from discrimination, abuse and exploitation in work, particularly in the informal sector.



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Youth Uncertainty (YOUR) World Research has worked with some of the most marginalised young people across eight fragile environments in Ethiopia and Nepal. The research has generated new knowledge about how marginalised youth perceive, navigate, negotiate and respond to uncertainty, and how this may affect their rights and pathways out of poverty in impoverished fragile and conflict affected communities, which may be prone to natural disasters.

In Woreta, the research assessed how marginalised and street-connected youth in the town perceive and respond to uncertainties shaped by the context of their lives. The research investigated how their perception of uncertainty changes and differs depending on intersecting aspects of poverty, wellbeing, inclusion, age, identity, gender and other structural inequalities.

This site summary provides an overview of the main findings from the research activities carried out in Woreta, Ethiopia. Woreta town is a transit point for many migrants and home to many seasonal workers. Detailed research was carried out with 40 young men and women.

Key Findings

Marginalisation and uncertainty among youth in Woreta involves the diversity of young people in a context with a prevalence of substance abuse, high rates of unemployment and migration, along with discrimination, abuse, exploitation and lack of protection particularly for casual workers.

Marginalised street-connected young people comprise disparate individuals with very different stories

Marginalised street-connected youth in Woreta can be differentiated and categorised into different groups based on what they do for a living and where they sleep at night. The group includes but is not limited to street vendors, seasonal migrant workers, daily labourers, domestic workers and security guards, organised working groups, *Khat* delivery workers, scrap metal and used plastic material collectors, and local alcoholic drink sellers.

A high and increasing rate of substance use and abuse among youth in Woreta

As elsewhere in Ethiopia, *Khat* (*Catha edulis*) leaves are widely used among young people. *Khat* chewing is more common among young men than women, and is also associated with smoking cigarettes, heavy consumption of alcohol, addiction, and exposure to sexually transmitted illnesses.

High school students in Woreta with poor academic performance, unemployed young men and those who work for people who chew *Khat*, young men who work in and around the bus station, truants and school dropouts, daily labourers and street connected young men commonly use *Khat* and consume alcohol.

Friends, peer pressure and poor academic performance as predictors of substance use and abuse

The influence of peers is a significant contributory factor to substance abuse among young people in Woreta, for example a young man who dropped out of school due to peer pressure and began consuming local drinks - *Tella* and *Araqi*:

My elder brother has not completed his high school education. I didn't have good friends. Most of my friends encouraged me to drink alcohol. Some of them tried to inspire me to flee the country ... "Life is a school. I look back and look forward". I would like to lead a better life... (Tadele, young man aged 19, 002).

There has been a public outcry about the problem of substance use, abuse and addiction and its consequences in Woreta

Elders who participated in adult male and female stakeholder meetings reported that both in and out of school students and even many civil servants chew *Khat* and consume alcohol. A young man from Woreta spoke of generational change in perception and experience:

I think that addiction is becoming a common trait among the youth. My friends and other young men in the neighbourhood think as if addiction is a sign of modernity. When we were children I didn't come across such kind of perception about addiction from our elders. Now the youth live in the world of addiction. If you are not strong enough you will be forced to be one of them (Belay, young man aged 18, 001).

Factors that protect from substance use and abuse

Both family members and friends are found to be important as protective factors. An absence of a history of family members' use and a lack of friends using and abusing substances, along with the presence of good role models serve as protective factors.

High rates of unemployment and problems of corruption

Young people throughout the research report high rates of unemployment among marginalised youth in Woreta. Because of corrupt practices, unemployed and marginalised young people, who are from poor households and without relatives in positions of power, are not able to secure the jobs made available by local government organisations. Many unemployed young people become engaged in casual labour with no access to social services and no protection if or when their rights are violated.

Abuse and exploitation of casual workers, and limited recognition, valuing and protection for casual work

Many casual workers in Woreta were found to be experiencing abuse and exploitation. These include many seasonal migrants, daily labourers, and waitresses who work in the widespread small restaurants and drinking places. Also domestic workers and security guards whose work is less valued, who are often exposed to different forms of abuse and labour exploitation.

Protection for migrants

The high rate of incoming rural-urban migrants into Woreta in search of jobs and a better life increases pressures on the numbers of unemployed young people seeking casual work in town, making the services for labour protection and their implementation an urgent need, along with increased provisions for rural employment.

What We Did

Methodology

The methodology was co-constructed with marginalised young people, exploring their perceptions of uncertainty across dimensions of place and space, mobility and migration, transition and growing up, self/others autonomy and relationships, and in conflict and environmental crisis. Two cross cutting themes - strategies and interventions, what helps and doesn't help in times of uncertainty – help provide insight for policy makers. Participatory, creative and moving methods were used, and data was drawn from multiple sources including direct observations, interviews, physical mapping, drawing, and audio-visual materials. Researchers spent time on-site interacting with people from local communities.

Location

Woreta is a town in South Gondar Zone, Amhara Regional State, located east of Lake Tana and 64 km to the north of Bahir Dar in northern Ethiopia. The town had an estimated total population of 33,200 in 2015. Woreta is a transit point for migrants travelling to/from big cities and small towns like Bahir Dar, Gondar, Debreabor, Addis Zemen and Hamusit. It is a home and destination for many seasonal migrants, many of whom become domestic, cafe and restaurant staff, security guards, daily labourers or other informal and casual work including street vending, shoe-shining, unloading transport. Woreta is believed to have one of the highest rates of *Khat* consumption in the country.



Coffee-tea cap innovative way of assessing



Open mapping with street connected youth



Participatory substance use tracking diagram



Validation workshop with street connected youth



Participants

Researchers worked with a total of 125 marginalised young people in Woreta, taking care to reach a gender balance in the sampling. Forty young participants took part in extended case studies. Most of them have had first-hand migration experience (26 internal and three international) and almost all of them (38 of 40) were out of school youth. 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 marginalised and a coding system was developed to monitor and report on the diversity of the young people in the case studies.

Research

The research was conducted in five phases, using qualitative approaches and applied creative and engaging participatory and visual methods, such as mapping, rivers of life, photo narrative, timeline, seasonal map, youth led walk, network and support diagrams were used that helped to reveal youth perspectives on the complexities of their lives. These methods enabled in-depth investigation of how uncertainty affects the lives and context of young people and how in turn young people seek strategies to shape their rights and change their contexts. The forty detailed case studies collected from Woreta show how marginalised young men and women experience intersecting aspects of poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability, education and socio-economic status, and provide insight into the strategies they have employed in the face of uncertainty. Findings were cross-checked with adults and stakeholders from the research location.