



PtY's Footprints in Ethiopia

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INTRODUCTION



A quiet shift is underway in the sun-scorched plains of Afar, where tradition runs deep, and opportunities for girls often run thin. Through the Power to You(th) program, adolescent girls and young women are finding their voices and using them to reshape their futures.

Since 2021, this initiative has worked with communities in Ethiopia to address the everyday barriers that hold young people back: harmful practices, violence, lack of information, and limited access to services. In Afar and Amhara, the programme creates space for girls to speak up, take charge of their health, and pursue their ambitions.

What makes this movement powerful is the collaboration behind it. Led by Amref Health Africa, Youth Network for Sustainable Development, and Hiwot Ethiopia, the project is about more than service delivery, it's about shifting mindsets, building community champions, and influencing systems from the ground up.

This booklet captures stories from the heart of Afar, stories of resilience, change, and hope. Stories that show what's possible when girls are trusted, supported, and empowered.



A HELPING HAND TO OTHER GIRLS

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“When my marriage was called off, I felt so happy and motivated to help other girls going through similar situations. I share my experiences and advise my friends on how to protect themselves and avoid early marriage. My main goal is to continue my education, develop my skills and achieve my dreams. I want to help girls suffering from early marriage because I understand the struggles they face. I aspire to advocate for women's rights and support vulnerable groups and my family once I finish my education. I am determined to share my story with girls in similar situations, guide them to find solutions and offer the support I once received.”



Asiya Yahya, the girl who rejected the marriage.

A SISTER'S KEEPER



My name is Zahara Ahmed. I reported the case of my friend Asiya Yahya, who was about to be forced into early marriage. At the time, stopping the marriage felt almost impossible, but I was able to find the right support with the help of Abdu Jemal who coordinates the Power to You(th) project intervention in Afar Ethiopia. He guided us on where to seek help, who to talk to, and how to take action. In the end, through collaboration, we successfully prevented the marriage.”

“That experience was life-changing. It not only strengthened us but also opened the door to more training and knowledge on issues like early marriage, FGM, GBV, and teenage pregnancy. Now, we are equipped to educate our friends, families, and the community, working to eliminate these harmful practices from our society. We empower girls by teaching them what to do and how to report when they face such situations. This experience has taught me a valuable lesson and made me even more determined to keep fighting, supporting, and protecting girls in every way possible.”

When I learned my best friend was to be married off, I acted. Thanks to the Power to You(th) sessions, I knew early marriage wasn't our fate. I reported it, and the intervention stopped the marriage. My friend will return to school next year. This project empowered us to protect each other.





Asiya Yahya and her friends are working together to guide young girls in their community. They share advice on how to stay safe from forced marriage and speak up for women's rights, offering support, strength, and hope.



Asiya, her friends, and fellow community advocates are dreaming bigger. With a shared vision, they are working to protect vulnerable girls from forced marriages and boldly speak up for women's rights; one voice, one girl at a time.

FROM POSSIBILITY TO POWER: THE RISE OF ARAMI'S YOUTH



In the heart of Afar, young people are turning resilience into real change. What began as life skills and leadership training through Power to You(th) has become a movement, one that's rewriting the future. Arami's youth are not just escaping the grip of early marriage, FGM, and substance abuse; they are building businesses, managing farms, running recreational centers, and daring to dream of becoming a full-fledged CSO. They are no longer waiting for change. They are the change.

"The youth in my region have come a long way. Despite many challenges, our hard work has rewarded us economic opportunities that allowed us to be financially independent, reducing reliance on our families and helping us avoid migration and substance abuse. Through different life skill trainings and trainings from Power to You(th) (PtY), we are empowered with the ability to communicate effectively with higher officials and raise our voices on important issues such as early marriage, FGM and GBV. We are actively working on job creation and have learned how to use our free time by generating income. Today we manage a recreational center and an agricultural farm, benefiting both ourselves and the youth in our community. We have a dream of becoming a CSO and doing even greater things expanding our impact even further in the future."



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“We youth are the driving force of change, the backbone of our community and the architects of the future. With the right opportunities, guidance and empowerment we have the potential to transform societies, break cycles of injustice and lead movements for progress. When we raise our voices, take action and support one another we become a powerful source for change. Investing in the youth through education, leadership trainings and skill development not only secures our future but also paves the way for stronger, more resilient communities. When given the tools to succeed we don't just dream of a better world, we create it.”



Ali Sahlal Mohammed - Aramis Youth club leader.



Aramis Youth Club started as a small idea among friends but has now become a source of home for many youth. Today, the club is an active space offering civic education, youth rights awareness, and advocacy that has led to real wins, including government-supported farmland, a recreational center, and a Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) house that brings together over 150 youth. Beyond helping themselves, these young changemakers are uplifting their entire community proving that when youth take the lead, communities grow stronger.

FARMING LAND



From advocacy to action; this farming land is the result of Aramis Youth Club's determination to create opportunities. Given by the government, the farm provides valuable skills and income to the youth who work the land, helping them build a stronger future for themselves and their community.



RECREATIONAL CENTER



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Aramis Youth Club owns a recreational centre and an income-generating DSTV house that serves 150-200 youth.

A RELIGIOUS LEADER'S FIGHT AGAINST HARMFUL TRADITIONS

"In Mille Woreda, one man's faith became a force for justice.

Religious Leader Mohammed Gumhed is breaking his silence and challenging harmful traditions from within the very heart of his community. Armed with conviction, compassion, and the courage to speak up, he is protecting girls from early marriage and violence. With training and support from Power to Youth, his voice has grown louder, his reach wider. His story is proof that change doesn't always come with noise; sometimes, it begins with a quiet voice that refuses to stay silent.



Sheikh Mohammed Gumhid, Religious Leader.



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“As a religious leader and advocate I stand against harmful traditions like early marriage and FGM. Guided by the teaching of the Qur'an, I work to protect girls through faith and collective efforts, breaking these practices for a better future.”

In our tradition-bound community, practices like child marriage and FGM/C were seen as normal. Since PtY's inception, I have participated in regular discussion platforms, using my voice to highlight the dangers of early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Additionally, I have joined a 'Woreda Sharia' that collaborates closely with the community to put an end to these harmful practices. I now advocate against early marriage and FGM within our community, emphasizing that faith can guide change.



'Woreda Sharia' refers to the presence of Sharia courts within the woreda level of administration, particularly in regions with a predominantly Muslim population like the Somali region.



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Mohammed uses his faith as a guide in his fight for girls' rights. He shows his community that true Islamic teachings stand for dignity, fairness, and protection, not harm. By grounding his advocacy in religion, he has been able to challenge harmful traditions in a way people trust and understand. His message is clear: faith and justice walk hand in hand. By grounding his message in religion, Mohammed has been able to challenge harmful traditions without losing the trust of those around him. It is this balance of belief and bravery that has made his voice so impactful.



GIRLS AND WOMEN AFFAIRS: THE RIGHT OF CHOICE

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“Every girl deserves the right to choose her own future. I am dedicated to working towards ending GBV and harmful practices. Together, we are building a future where women are empowered, their rights are protected, and they can aspire to live free from harm and discrimination.”

Before the Power to You(th) project, our efforts lacked coordination and community voices. Now, local youth groups are more engaged. Last year, 2024, we prevented over 20 child marriages through improved youth participation. The project has transformed our approach, fostering closer collaboration with young people, strengthening enforcement against harmful practices, and enhancing links between community initiatives and social norms.



Adnan Hussen, Office of Women and Social Affairs.



YOUTH FOR CHANGE: KIBALA YOUTH CLUB



“We believe in empowering youth to raise their voices, ask questions and advocate for their own concerns, as active participation in decision-making enables us to solve our own problems. Who understands our struggles better than we do? The solution lies in the hands of youth. Peer-to-peer discussions, forums, trainings and experience sharing are essential in this journey. As Kibala Charitable Organization, we have come a long way, inspiring others and driving change, but there is still much more to achieve. We seek continued support to push forward, create more opportunities and break the barriers holding us back. Together, we can eliminate harmful traditional practices like FGM, child marriage and GBV paving the way to a brighter future.”



Kibala Youth club From left to right: Abdu Tilahun, Rahma Hassen, Suadik Hussen.





LUCY INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (LIDA): STRENGTH OF A WOMAN



“There is so much that can be achieved when women are empowered. Women are valuable resources with immense potential. Even in the most challenging situations, women have the strength and intelligence to break through and succeed. With the right guidance and an understanding of their abilities, they can accomplish remarkable things. Harmful traditional practices have long held women back in our community, but we have witnessed significant change. Today, more women are stepping into influential roles, proving their impact in decision-making and leadership. My peers and I stand with confidence, knowing that by creating opportunities for others, we can drive even greater change. As a strong member of a women-led CSO and a speaker in an advocacy group where fifty percent of board members are female, I believe that together, we can reshape the future.”

Before joining the Power to You(th) project, I was a quiet member of LIDA, unsure of how to make a change. The project’s mentorship sessions boosted my confidence, enabling me to lead an initiative addressing SRHR issues for young women. PtY provided me with purpose and tools, and now I mentor others, building networks to amplify our voices in regional women’s structures.



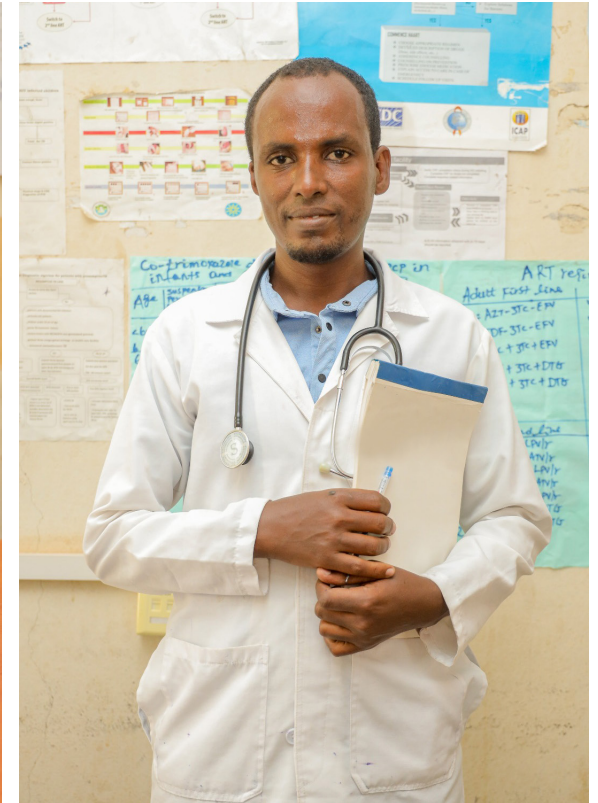
Aysha Hamed, Executive Director of LIDA.



RESTORING WOMEN THROUGH HEALTHCARE

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I have witnessed the devastating impact of GBV and harmful practice on women's lives and I know that this fight requires action, not just words. As a healthcare worker, I am committed to provide medical care and advocate for stronger policies to protect girls and women they deserve. I believe that raising awareness, training healthcare professionals, engaging with policymakers and empowering young people with knowledge, we can break the cycle of harm. My mission is clear. I will continue to stand on the frontlines, giving for better healthcare services and doing my part to ensure that girls suffer less.



Ahmed Indris, a Health Office Expert from Mille District Hospital.

ASSALLE PASTORAL MULTI SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



Asale Pastoral Multisectoral Development Organization (APMDO) stands as a champion for women, girls, and youth in Ethiopia's underserved areas. APMDO is helping to break cycles of harmful traditions and uplift women, girls, and youth. What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a trusted movement for change, challenging harmful practices like child marriage, FGM, and Gender-Based Violence, while creating safer spaces for young people to succeed.

Through the support of Power to You[th], APMDO received targeted technical training to strengthen its skills, essential office equipment to improve its daily operations, and vital connections to UN agencies and government networks to enhance its ability to mobilize resources. This support helped transform APMDO into a stronger, more capable organization ready to lead youth-centered programs and expand advocacy efforts against FGM, child marriage, GBV, and unintended pregnancies.

Today, APMDO is empowering youth groups, driving community advocacy, and building lasting partnerships that will sustain their vision long after the project ends; a vision of a future where girls and young women can live with freedom, rights, and opportunity.





Arayti Seid, V/Director of AMPDO.



Adem Hussen, Project Manager at AMPDO.

DUBTI YOUTH CLUB: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE YOUTH AND THE STATE



This youth club is driven by strong, knowledgeable members who understand the importance of communication and advocacy. We are equipped to engage with the government, raise our concerns and use our voice to advocate for our needs. Through our hard work and dedication, we have successfully secured a farmland, unlocking such valuable resources for our financial independence. This achievement shows the impact of active involvement as well as the importance of acquiring the proper life skills and resource mobilisation trainings from PtY that empowered us to get to our goals.





Ibrahim Mohammed (Dubti Youth Club at Dubti Woreda).





