

Improve the SRHR of Working Youth in Industrial Parks



REPORT from the Field



FOREWORD

Way back in mid-2019, a team of DSW's key staff members convened for devising the launching of an industrial park-based project whose thematic conception built upon the experiences and expertise gained from already an ongoing workplace intervention at the flower farms. The idea was that like those in the flower farms, youth working at industrial parks were in need to get their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) improved.

For about three years, our authentic presence at the industrial parks found in Bole Lemi (Addis Ababa) and Hawassa (Sidama Region) was essentially corresponded to the needs for the undertaking of a project themed, "Improve the SRHR of Vulnerable Working Youth." Since the same youth working in the industrial parks socially get to interact in the community outside their work life and most among them attend as students the Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET), from the inception the project was designed with integrated activities to embrace and benefit these target groups as well.

The two industrial parks that our project embraced to address the SRHR needs of young employees have employed about forty-five thousands youth. Majority of these youth workers are females and being below the age of 30. We set out to reach 25,000 working youth whose ages range from 15 – 29 with the SRHR information and service provision. Despite the pushback at some points in time by the challenges of COVID-19 lingering at its peak, our resolve to keep the project rolling made a difference in detangling the exacerbated vulnerability of workplace youth.

Apart from focusing on the SRHR issues, the multi-sectoral approach we initiated by involving stakeholders has doubled the efforts to address the sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV) in the industrial parks.

A key milestone marked by our advocacy efforts when a team of the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) made a study tour of the project at Bole Lemi industrial park during which the Ministry took acknowledgment of the impact being brought this pilot project that DSW initiated. This has furthered commitments by FMoH in a way to ensure the sustainability of the project and replicate DSW's workplace interventions.

On behalf of DSW Ethiopia, I would like to extend gratitude to UNFPA along with both the Netherlands and Norwegian Embassies in Ethiopia for their technical and financial supports of this project. Most of which my appreciation goes to the Federal Ministry of Health for owning the project in a spirit of partnership throughout the project life. It is also important to acknowledge the Bole Lemi and Hawassa Industrial Parks whose steadfast supports contributed to our ability to report the success of this project.



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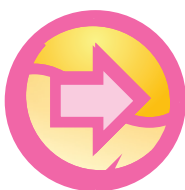
About DSW

Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) is a global development organization that focuses on the needs and potential of the largest youth generation in history. We are committed to creating demand for and access to health information, services, supplies, and economic empowerment for youth. We achieve this by engaging in advocacy, capacity development, and reproductive health initiatives, so that young people are empowered to lead healthy and self-determined lives. With our headquarters in Hannover, Germany, DSW operates two liaison offices in Berlin and Brussels, as well as maintaining a strong presence in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Established and officially registered in 2000, DSW Ethiopia was the first to go operational among the three other DSW country offices in Africa. In the course of the past twenty years, the country office in Ethiopia has been able to diversify the intervention of its thematic focuses by integrating nutrition programs with SRH issues. Its target demographic groups further extended to benefit working youth in industrial parks, flower farms and micro and small enterprises.

The PROJECT

DSW has been implementing work place-based youth sexual and reproductive health/YSRH project in two industrial parks. One is at Bole Lemi and the other in Hawassa. The theme of the project dubbed “Improving the SRH of Vulnerable Working Youth.” It mainly focuses on enhancing knowledge, fostering demand for youth-friendly services (YFS) on the sexual & reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The project supports to advance the respect and protection of the SRHR provision. The goal of the project is to contribute towards empowering vulnerable youth so that they can be able to exercise their SRHR as well as their rights to be free from violence, exploitation and discrimination.

Key Implementing Activities



DSW has been able to improve knowledge and attitude of working youth in terms of healthy life and access to service provision, including enhancing the capacities of health facilities. Major SRHR problems such as unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are addressed at various degrees of success. The following are key activities conducted by the project

Key STRATEGIES & COMPONENTS

PEER APPROACH: The peer approach allows a series of actions engaged by the youth in the form of cascading skills between and among them. Through such serialized actions, the number of youth can be reached out with less cost and in short time. This approach has flexibility in time and activity location depending on the will and convenience of the young people. Empowered young people are effective champions to advocate and mobilize their peers. They are able to understand issues and interpret the contexts of their cultural and age-specific appropriation.



EXISTING STRUCTURES: one of the key strategies that impact on the success of a project in terms of sustainability is engaging in the existing structures. From the inception, this intervention was designed to get involved communities whose residence is in close proximity of the industrial parks. Key among them, community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) were the ones engaged in which they support the project in many ways of addressing the SGBV.



IE-SBCC: The information and education/social and behavior change communication materials are tailored intent on impacting the knowledge, attitude, behavior and practices of the target groups. The IE-SBCC materials are designed in evidence and need-based approach.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: DSW's capacity development approach is a cross-cutting component in the strategy that impacts the outcomes of the project. This project has embedded in the provision of capacity development program to enhance the skills of youth working in the industrial parks. Sector offices, factory owners in the industrial parks, public health care providers and other stakeholders were parts of the beneficiaries in capacity development activities.



Locations of Intervention Area

Bole Lemi and Hawassa Industrial Parks have employed at least 45,000 youth and their respective location is in Addis Ababa and Sidama region split about two-hundred eighty kilometers apart. These Industrial Parks are home to the production of some of Ethiopia's large and diverse export items. Built on the model of modern industrial zones, many foreign-based companies made them the potential investment destination.

- ✧ Industrial parks clinic staffs trained in youth-friendly services (YFS) provision and linked with public health facilities
- ✧ Short-acting contraceptives, medical equipment and supplies provided to first aid clinics
- ✧ Condom corners established both at the companies' first aid corners in the industry parks
- ✧ Referral system established between public health facilities and industry parks which increases access to SRH services

In terms of approaching youth in the industrial park, peer education through flexible mechanisms played vital role to improve the knowledge of youth about SRH and create opportunity for experience sharing. Peer education sessions include topics such as life skills, SRH, unintended pregnancy and safe abortion. Drug and substance abuse, sexual gender-based violence, STIs and family planning are also parts of the peer education sessions. In addition, youth dialogue led by peer educators was conducted while youth aboard the service bus on their ways in and from home. In some cases employees could be permitted three hours a week during working hours for participating at SRHR education sessions. The IE-SBCC materials tailored in context and age-specific manner for working youth were disseminated within the industrial parks. During COVID-19, information boxes got installed to in the premises of the industrial parks at the convenient sites where youth could pick flyers or leaflets of their choice on their ways in and out of the premises. Posters and brochures were particularly designed to cover information about Coronavirus in Amharic and Afan Oromo languages. The information provision focused on preventive mechanisms of SRH problems and impact youth to nurture health seeking behavior by accessing to the services.



Private Clinic at Bole Lemi Industrial Park

Contexts & Thematic: Working Youth at Industrial Parks

As the efforts to address the prevalence of unmet needs for SRHR services attended in many more provisions, the gaps are still lingering in such particular areas the flower farms and industrial parks where the rate of employed young people bulged. The dividends, however, rest on the ability to contribute toward meeting their needs for SRHR. This is because; industrial parks increasingly become a magnet for youth employment opportunities. With more youth concentrated in workplaces, the demand risk and vulnerability to SRHR issues grow higher.

In the case of this project, low levels of knowledge and confidence in sexual and reproductive health issues, coupled with the sudden transition of work life and the circumstances in which most of these youth who are females coming from nonurban areas had to live on their own where the presence of other adult males can lead the potential for risks, including the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and unintended pregnancy. It makes it even worse when the level of awareness about and access to SRHR information and services as well as SGBV issues remains low.

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Youth-Friendly Private Clinic at Hawassa Industrial Park

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More so, the female employees at the industrial parks constituted ranging from 80 to 95 percent, the youngest among them being seventeen and most others in their twenties (IPDC, 2021.) It was established that the risk of unintended pregnancies among female workers in the industrial parks appears high due to either unawareness on safe sexual activities or as a result of rampant SGBV prevalence.

Under economic pressure to fulfill their livelihood incomes, incidences aren't uncommon that some female workers engage in commercial sex works when they are in their off-days. This condition exposes the risks for the prevalence of STIs and HIV among working youth in industrial parks. Unintended pregnancies can as well be resulted in consensual relationships between coworkers who often live together in cohabitation outside the industrial parks. Being unaware of the consequences of unsafe sex, many of these young couples face the risks to be infected with various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Mostly, the absence of youth-friendly SRH services both inside the industrial parks and outside in the proximity, it makes it hard for working youth to seek the service unless they are hard put to it. Given the fact that significant number of the employees in the industrial parks comprised those who are young, female, migrant, less educated and uninformed about SRHR, the health service system should recognize the need of this growing segment of disadvantaged population.





Eyerusalem, an employee at Hawassa Industrial Park

Contraception Impacts My Work Life

Knowing about certain things is one thing and getting involved by taking roles in things we know is quite another. This project took us all the way through knowing certain things about SRH and gets us as close as possible to take roles and make informed decision. I learned through IE-SBCC materials and peer discussion about the various types of contraception, not only how it is being used but also when to utilize them. The provision of family planning services is now accessible and I have also made a choice which one to use when. It impacts on my ability at workplace and decision I make to have the choice of my family size. This can be translated into an economic advantage in terms of earning. The more my family planning works, the more quality time I spend at the work place to earn more.

APPROACHES

Working in the context of industrial parks needs multiple approaches for addressing the problems of youth in the workplace. Investors are time sensitive and give focus on production. As this impact the availability of youth for discussion, training and experience sharing. Enforcing conventional approaches with which to undertake a project such as this so important would have been too hard to get through it.

The implementation format rather needs a different approach in a flexible manner. By taking into account the time constraints and the concerns and interests of the employers, project activities were set forth without affecting the production processes in the industrial parks. Since the project focuses on demand generation for working youth on SRHR and SGBV information, creating multiple sources of accession is a priority action to reach out large number of youth. Training was another key development factor this project disseminate skills among the youth working at the industrial parks. The trainings include training of trainers (ToT.) Skills had to be transferred through cascading activities at all levels for those who weren't able to attend the ToT skills training. These youth create accesses to information about SRHR and SGBV issues in ways such as by cascading training, engaging peer learning, conducting dialogues, arranging mini-media activities, disseminating IE-SBCC materials in various formats, live stream of radio programs, discussing and mentoring. Owing to have large number of youths in the Parks, media outlet is crucial in which audio learning materials contributes a lot in terms of disseminating the necessary information and messages. It is a good opportunity for youth to read informative materials like leaflet and newsletter on their ways home aboard service buses, for these were some of the best opportunities considered to be convenient for disseminating SRHR information. The service buses often take 45 minutes to an hour-and-half times to and from workplaces as routinely as daily. Leaflets are read loud and disseminated, conduct dialogues as the facilitators provide discussion points per pair who took seats in close proximity. There is also a library and youth/girls can have access to different IE-SBCC materials over the weekends and during evening times. There is also another opportunity for female workers to get additional information from the edutainment events such as mass sporting activities of the various kinds.



Discussing SRH issues during tea breaks

Surviving SGBV

One year into her fresh work life at SUMEC Textile Company in Bele Lemi Industrial Parks, Serkalem, an eighteen-years-old girl, has moved twice her rental residence. Last time, she rented a bedsitter within the residential compound where her landlord's family members live. Uninvited, a familiar person in his late 30s dropped by offering help in rearranging the household items scattered all over the floor of the room she just moved that looks untidy. It took the man a few tricky moments to force Serkalem in the bed and violently raped the young girl before he slipped off unnoticed by anyone in the compound.

Serkalem who is a country girl had to drop out schooling at grade 7. One can imagine the level of her awareness about her sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs. Her parents who earn their living from subsistent farming were no longer afforded to meet the costs for her education. Like many country girls before her, immigrating to bigger urban areas was the best option to seek incomes. She was one of the tens of thousands naïve young women who got the opportunities to be employed at the industrial parks. Serkalem has been working now for the past one year with SUMEK Textile in Bole Lemi Industrial Park.

Her debut to stay on her own for the very first time without her parents around had seemed normal and manageable as she continues to go along with an operator of cutting and edging machine at her workplace. Unlike in the past when she had a few of her coworkers shared the rented room, which was less costly and safer, for the second time she moved to another house she chose to be alone.

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“The good things at the industrial parks where through intervention knowledge of SRH issues are disseminated using the peer-to-peer discussion and accessing to the IE-SBCC materials specifically tailored in contexts. Serkalem is one of the frequent presents at such sessions. Like the IE-SBCC print materials, there are also audio programs in which SRH and related issues transmitted and discussed during lunch breaks,” says Muna, a peer educator who has received training in life skills at DSW’s youth development training center and working as first aider at the same company with Serkalem.

“Muna in her late twenties meet with Serkalem often at the first aid corner where Muna conducts counseling for the employees. The day Serkalem came to the first aid corner seeking counseling and some treatments, she appeared nervous and in different mood than she has ever been on the previous occasions we met,” Muna recalls the condition of Serkalem the day she was both physically and sexually assaulted.

Shortly after Serkalem confided to about the SGBV case, Muna took no chance to accompany her on the way to Gandhi Hospital for further medical cares and Serkalem was admitted in patient and spent there for the next one week. “The poor girl may be recovered from the physical pain but remains traumatized that took away her enthusiastic energy and being proactively playful at will,” concerns Muna who observed her condition while still in a rehab center.

The sexual predator was nabbed as soon as he was reported to the police and being charged before the Criminal Court for committing SGBV. Although the assailant had confessed his crime in the court, hitherto, the circumstances remain unbeknown as to how the suspect who is at large has gone missing since then, Muna said in despair. As this story is underway to be compiled, Serkalem has been at the rehab center run by the non-governmental organization where she gets the basic needs awaiting her full recovery. Meanwhile Muna is in contact with Serkalem who is progressively recovering.

Self-Esteem

Unintended pregnancy wasn’t uncommon for frequent maternity related leaves or sick leaves as a result of unsafe abortion. Such cases, by and large, are in decline due to an increase in awareness on SRH issues. This is one of the benefits and positive impacts the project exerted. Employees have developed good life skills from trainings and other activities tailored to nurture healthy behaviors. I, for one, have made a lot of changes in a way I was taking so lightly of things that could affect my life. The fact that we are aware about our SRH needs, there are many ways by which we can be able to protect ourselves from unintended pregnancy, HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and even more importantly we build self-esteem.

Kadija, an employee at the industrial park

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Peer Discussions Enthusue Youth

Of all the various activities that this project brought in whose effects felt almost immediately were the peer-led discussions and capacity development. We monitor round after round of the peer-led discussion sessions and find out that each time a participant goes through it the increase in knowledge on SRHR issues comes with a lot of enthusiasm. Changes in attitude and health-seeking behaviors particularly among the young women working in the TAL Industry in particular and those others generally across the Hawassa Industrial Park are improved and observable. The ripple effects of empowering and improving the SRHR needs of youth at the industrial park reached out their extended families with whom they share knowledge. By the fact that the provision for SRH services remain accessible to the young workers who always know how and where to get about, the contribution this project made is worth testifying. This has resulted in many of our workers' attitude that exhibited through their self-esteem and effectiveness at workplace. The employers too benefit in the their employees' renewed productivity, decline in a tardiness and absenteeism as well as the absence of frequent sick leaves and staff attrition on the part of the employees who are empowered by this project.



Aberu, Nurse at TAL industry in Hawassa Industrial Park



Peer discussion

A Lesson from Life: Moving Forward

As a teenage high school student, I had succumbed to peer-pressure to start seeing my first high school sweetheart. Honestly without knowing where that relationship would lead to. I was then eleventh grade student and the first date had changed everything for the rest of the time. The very first date that I went out with my new boyfriend had brought along unintended pregnancy. I didn't expect that to happen to me because I was a virgin and first timer in sex. My assumption was that as if having unsafe sex for the first time would result in no pregnancy. With very limited knowledge of sexual and reproductive health issues, including the use of contraception, the last thing I would be concerned was about pregnancy. If the final exam didn't come in a couple of weeks following the incident, I won't have had a passing grade point average at 11th grade and be able to complete my 12th grade the following year. After a few attempts to abort the pregnancy that grew by day,



Training session



Tmsel Tefera, Nurse from Jay Jay Textile Company Bole Lemi Industrial Park

Trainings Impact on Quality Service Provision

There are two major benefits that the project undertaken by DSW at the Bole Lemi Industrial Park brought to the target community. The dissemination of SRH information through various strategies has created both the awareness needed and the demands for SRH service provision by those in need. The up-tick in utilizing and accession of the SRH services at Goro Health Center came about since the implementation of this project reached its peak. Majority of our clients at the Goro Health Center are referred to courtesy of the project that benefits the employees of the industrial park. Most of these employees who are referred to the services are youth and female. The trainings that were facilitated by DSW on SRH for service providers have impacted the improvement of quality services provided in a youth-friendly manner.



Engidu, Bole Lemi IPDC Coordinator

SRH Service Provision Goes Mainstream in Industrial Park

Prior to the arrival of DSW's project at Bole Lemi Industrial Park, we haven't been as proactively engaging as we have become to focus on the access to the provision of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Since the launching of the project in 2019, three factories mainstream the provision of SRH information, counseling and referral services for their employees. Each time a project activity was introduced involving the youth who work in one of the factories at Bole Lemi Industrial Park, the effect of cascading the activity over other peers who didn't initial participate was fast enough to reach out many more youth. The replication continues throughout the past nearly three years. Knowledge on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), SRH issues, peer-to-peer discussions, media-based activities and the various IE-SBCC materials availability reached as many youth at work as possible whose behaviors visibly impacted. As a result, the dissemination of SRH information created widespread awareness and demands for contraception or SRH/ family planning service continue to up-tick. The awareness and ability to prevent unintended pregnancy among youth working at this industrial park are some of the most notable progressed being made by this project. We also observe how the different training programs in the form of capacity development for our employees facilitated and conducted by DSW at its training center in Bishoftu (Debrezeit) made a lot of differences.



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