



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Enhancing Community Governance

to improve girls' and women's status
and health

- Case studies collected from CARE
Ethiopia-

Presented at APHA conference 2007 by Dr. Barbara Pose

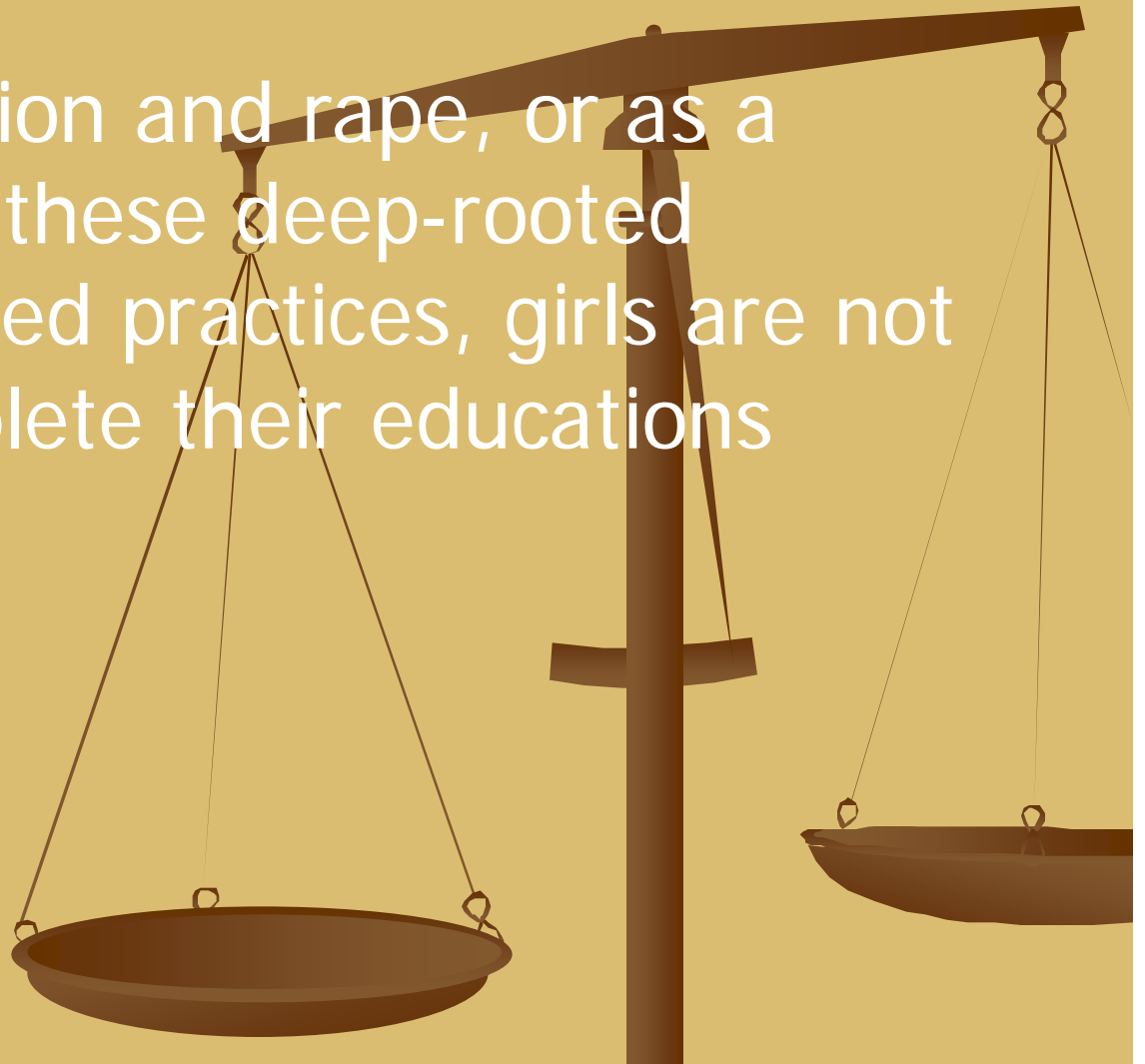


CARE Ethiopia has worked in education through the USAID-funded *Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO)* and **Strengthening Communities Through Partnerships for Education (SCOPE)** projects.

Through BESO, CARE has provided technical assistance to implementers in capacity building for school administration and community-based groups, such as Girls' Advisory Committees to improve student retention.

Why is school retention of girls a problem in Ethiopia?

- To avoid abduction and rape, or as a consequence of these deep-rooted culturally accepted practices, girls are not allowed to complete their educations



Projects in other sectors within the same geographical area

- Health project to enhance Family Planning and HIV/AIDS awareness including advocacy against harmful traditional practices
- Livelihood project including a women's empowerment component and Self-help Saving and Credit Groups



GEC and PTA against HTP— Case Study

Melina Duba

- Melina Duba is 15 year-old student and a victim of early marriage. She was forced into marriage by the relative of a friend.
- This man abducted Melina on her way back from school and took her to the Dawa gold mining area. She began to understand the reality of early and unrequited marriage. Her husband began to verbally and physically abuse her. After some time, she managed to relay her location to her friends at home; they reported her whereabouts to their Girls' Empowerment Committee (GEC).
- The GEC tried to bring her back to her family and resume her education and they finally succeeded after several weeks.
- She gave birth before she was even legally married. Her husband has no income, and his mother financially supports both of her sons.
- The Girl's Club assists Malina Duba to continue the seventh grade. Now she has been promoted to the eighth grade.

Community Self-help and saving Groups

Zabida's Family- CARE East Hararghe

- Zabida Mohammed, 25-years-old, lives in Jiru Gemechu PA, Mumed village. She is a mother of 4 children and a widow. The family of her husband took the only thing her husband left for her livelihood, farmland, and forced her to return to her family with her children.
- Zabida had to take her children out of school and their health deteriorated because did not have enough money to support them.
- While Zabida endured these problems, the HIBRET project began in her district. CARE staff started teaching the community about the importance of saving. Zabida was the first to join the Savings Group.
- After joining the Group, Zabida took loans and began petty trading.
- Through trading, Zubaida was able to feed her children, send them to school and afford medical treatment.
- Zabida has started advising other women in her village who are not part of a Savings Group to get involved.

GEC raise funds from the community

E.g. Dherito School/Borena

- The schools' Girl Empowerment Club (GEC) is effective in mobilizing the community to support girls in school. The GEC leader of this school, a female teacher, Negele Buruno, plays a significant role in organizing the girls and helps them to discuss their problems and present issues to the Parents and Teachers Association.
- The club collected 250 Birr (\$28) from the community, contributions from the girls, and raised other funds by performing plays and selling soft drinks and tea.
- Having a female director resulted in an increase in girls' enrollment.
- 10 girls are supported through the GEC. The clubs bought and gave them dresses, notebooks and pens.
- GEC members brought back 2 girls which were taken out of school by their parents by promising to pay for their expenses.

Conclusion from Case studies

- Institutional strengthening empowered Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School-based Girls' Empowerment Clubs to retain and bring girls back into school by negotiating with parents, and supporting girls to go to court and speak out against forced marriage. Halfway houses protecting girls from abduction and rape allow them to complete their secondary educations far from their parents' homes.

Lessons Learned

- Using community structures and leaders is essential to preventing harmful traditional practices.
- Harmful practices with negative health impact cannot be addressed by health interventions alone.
- Building community competence in different sectors and increasing good governance can overcome harmful cultural practices.
- Attribution of outcomes to specific interventions is difficult in a society in transition.

