

Child Protection Practices in Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Every child has the right to be safe from any harm and maltreatment. However, millions of children are threatened by different maltreatment every year throughout the world. This study aimed to explore the child protection practices in Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This study used a qualitative research method with a case study design. Data were collected using in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and non-participant observation. In Addis Ababa city, children are exposed to mental and physical maltreatment such as abuse, neglect, violence, labour exploitation, trafficking, sexual abuse etc. In response to this, different bodies have tried to protect the children in the study area. The family has the greatest role in protecting the children by meeting their physical, mental, and social needs. Police officers have protected children from beatings, physical attacks, labour abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological attacks arrested criminals and presented them for justice. The judges have also provided services like legal aid, child-friendly justice, child maintenance, adoption and custody for abused children. Furthermore, social work offers free psychosocial support. However, low skills and experience of police officers, loose execution of child protection laws, delays in reporting cases, illegal bargaining with perpetrators, escape of criminals, repeated postponements of the court to give justice, lack of awareness by the family/community and the inability of children to explain the violence are the major challenges of child protection practices. The involvement of social professionals in the justice system, the beginning of family bench counselling services, and the use of Close Circuit Television (CCTV forthwith) Camera in the in-justice process are some of the good practices that have bright feature prospects for child protection practices in the study area.

Keywords: Child, child protection practices, services, challenges, prospects, Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Introduction:

According to the UN, a child is any human being under the age of 18 that calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to protect and ensure children's rights, such as the right to access to healthcare and education, freedom from exploitation, torture, abuse, violence, or any ill-treatment (Blanchfield, 2013). Child maltreatment includes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, such as child abuse, child neglect, child exploitation, child trafficking, child hazardous labour, street lives, child marriage, lack of access to justice, and violence against children, child recruitment by armed forces or group, sexual abuses, prostitution, pornography, sex tourism etc., neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual

or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity (Medrano et al., 2012, p.12).

Globally, approximately 1.7 billion children have experienced this maltreatment every year (World Vision International, 2019; Medrano et al., 2012). In Africa, 275 million children either witness or are victims of various violence or abuses. In Ethiopia, children are exposed to physical, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual violence, neglect, home punishments, labour exploitation, trafficking, difficult street lives etc. (Genaye, 2008; Getnet, 2009). For instance, between 1999 and 2009, more than 26,047 cases of children were victims of different exploitations and abuses in Ethiopia (Save the Children, 2013).

To the worst, sexual abuse and exploitation of male children is one of the emerging social problems affecting the physical, social and psychological well-being of children in Ethiopia (Getnet, 2009). Perpetrators can be anyone, such as parents, family members or caregivers, friends or acquaintances, strangers, people in positions of authority such as teachers, soldiers or police officers, employers, health care workers, and other children (Medrano et al., 2012).

Hence, children need to be protected, because they are physically, mentally and emotionally immature and unable to adequately protect themselves (ibid.). According to UNICEF, every child has the right to be safe from any violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices (UNICEF, 2021). According to Article 18 of the United Nations Convention, the 'best interests of the child' is the cornerstone of child protection practices (Medrano et al., 2012).

In the same vein, there are different international and national laws, policies and agreements concerning child protection practices, such as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959, Minimum Age Convention 1973, U. N. Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, and Child Protection and Placement Agreements of 1996 focusing of child protections (Wendy, 2007; UNICEF, 2017). Ethiopia is also a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 2005). The FDRE Constitution (1995), under Article 36, states that every child has the right to life, name and nationality, to be cared for by his/her parents or legal guardians and legal bodies to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence and maltreatment.

Effective child protection practices involve working with a wide range of formal and informal bodies, such as parents/ caregivers, communities, government bodies, non-governmental organizations, donors, etc. Successful child protection practice strengthens the capacity of all these actors (Medrano et al., 2012). Families are the first intuition for children's child's protection and support. Families' primary social, moral and legal responsibility in society is to care for children and meet their basic needs. Communities are the second safety net for children. The state has the main responsibility for securing children's right to protection. Governments should establish a national child protection system (CPS) (ibid.; UNICEF, 2021). In Ethiopia, there is the initiation of child-friendly justice (CFJ) that focuses on the child protection system, which has good prospects (Tsegaye, 2011).

However, there are gaps between the practical implementation of the international conventions and national child protection practices (UNICEF, 2004 & 2008). Fragmented national strategies for children; uncoordinated policy interventions, weak communication and articulation; unconsolidated and poorly enforced legislation with notable gaps in children's legal protection; and insufficient attention given to children are some of the challenges (Medrano et al., 2012; ACPF, 2014a & 2014b; Amare, 2017). The immaturity of children in terms of cognitive, physical, social and psychological development are other major impedes to child protection practices (Wendy, 2007). Lack of appropriate and standard child protection practices and strategies

among family members, the wider community, legal bodies and other organizations working on the issue also challenges (UN, 2005). Therefore, this study tried to explore the existing child protection practices in Arada Sub City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Theoretical Foundation of Child Protection Practices:

Since the 1960s, several theories have been used to explain child protection practices and strategies, such as ecological system theory, psychodynamic theory, psychopathology theory, attachment theory etc. (Schelbe & Geiger, 2017). For this study, ecological system theory was used. This theory is important to explore child protection practices and strategies in the social environment. Ecological system theory explains that within systems, the social environment and their interrelationships can influence children's development and well-being (Krishnan, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested four levels of environment that can influence child protection practices, development and well-being. The first level is that of the microsystem, which is closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact, such as family. The second level is named the mesosystem, which provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem. For example, the relationships between the family and child protection services, the community and the child, the child and the courts, or the child and the police stations. The third system, known as the exo-system, this layer defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. Parent workplace schedules, community-based family resources, and school departments are examples of this system. Lastly, the macro system refers to the outermost layer in the child's environment. This layer is composed of cultural values, customs, social and political norms, and the legal system which has impacted child protection practices.

Based on the aforementioned explanations, this theory clearly shows that the environment that children grow up in contributes to proper child protection practices and affects the overall development of children. Based on the four levels of environment, the individual level refers to the personal characteristics and history of a person that can make him or her susceptible to either perpetrating or suffering abuse. The community level relates to the settings in which social interactions take place, such as neighbourhoods or schools, and the characteristics of those settings that can contribute to child abuse. Societal factors refer to conditions in society that contribute to abuse, such as social norms that encourage harsh punishment of children, the absence of welfare safety nets for children, and economic inequalities (Medrano et al., 2012). Hence, child protection practices are not the result of a single factor, rather there must be a holistic response in terms of respecting children and about all children in all conditions. A complex interaction is always playing at different levels that increase effective child protection practices.

Research Methods and Materials:

Study Setting: This study was conducted in Arada Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2019. Arada is one of the 10 sub-cities of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. It is located at 4 Kilo in front of Menilik II preparatory school, and it has 10 districts. It is known as the centre of the old and the new generation's artistic, social and urban lifestyles. Its main sights include St. George's Cathedral, the great Menelik II Square, the Hager Fikir Theater, the Taitu Hotel, Charles de Gaulle Square and many other historical areas and structures. The sub-city has an area of 9.9 sq. Km with

a population density per sq. m of 22, 805.1. It has 105,963 males and 120,036 females with a total population of 225, 999¹

According to the data found from the Arada Sub-City Health Bureau,² 66881 children live in the Arada Sub-city. As Arada Women, Children and Youth Office stated³ more than 522 children below 18 years old have been exposed to different maltreatment. This implies that the Arada sub-city is highly populated, particularly with children, and there is a high level of child abuse, exploitation and maltreatment. The centre of the sub-city has attracted a variety of trade investments, especially hotels and bars resulting in high levels of child maltreatment and abuse.

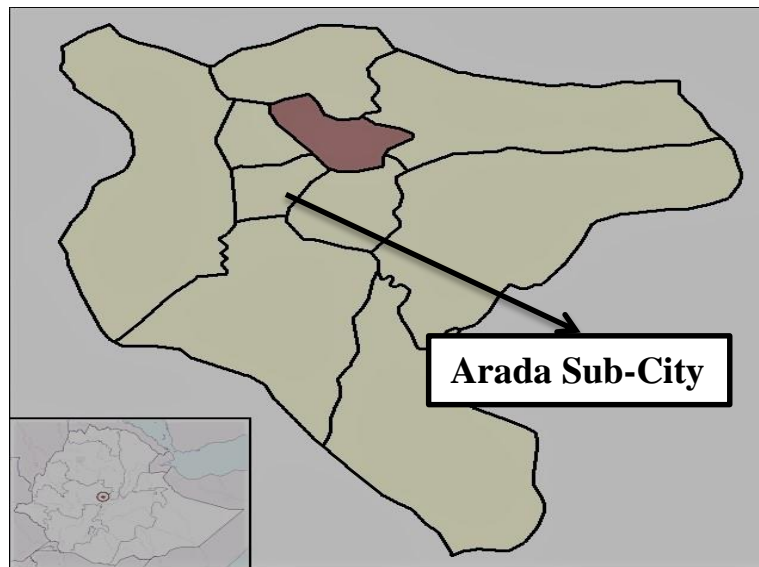


Figure 1: Arada Sub-City (Excerpt from Google Map, 2023)

Study Design: In this study, a qualitative research method and case study design were used. The case study design was used as a specific study design to meet the overall objective of the research by focusing on particular cases (Kothari, 2004). Hence, case study design is vital to explore the child protection practices in Arada Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Study Participants and Recruitments Procedure: The participants of this study comprised of diversified categories of persons in close contact with children, such as children's parents, social professionals, judges and police. The specific criteria for selection are that these groups of persons have direct involvement in addressing the rights of children and child protection practices. Furthermore, these individuals are the major actors in child protection practices.

All participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Firstly, the police officers were selected deliberately, because they are the first people who handle the cases. Then, parents were selected using snowball sampling procedures on behalf of the police officers to find out practical experiences of the issues. The family is the first body that has strong attachments and provides protection services for the children.

¹ Arada Sub-city Administration through collected data in 2019.

² through collected data in 2019

³ through collected data in 2017

The judges and social professionals were also taken as participants because they have knowledge of the cases by their positions and experiences, and can provide critical insights about the challenges and prospects of child protection practices. Police officers, judges, and social professionals were purposively selected considering the requirements necessary for the study, including the presence of child-friendly justice, family bench and victim bench services. These legal experts are highly engaged in child protection legal services. Moreover, social professionals working in the court process of abused children, children in conflict with the law and custodial cases were selected. Then, after interviewing them, these persons identified others who qualified for the set criteria and continued until saturation points were reached.

Methods of Data Collection and Tools: In this study, in-depth interviews, key informants interviews, and non-participant observation were employed. The police officers and judges from the Arada sub-city were taken as key informants interviewed. These participants were taken to learn the key child protection practices, explore the existing challenges of child protection practices, and assess the prospects of child protection practices. Furthermore, parents of the abused children were taken to in-depth interviews know the lived experiences of the abused children. Besides, the social professions were also taken as in-depth interviews to know the child protection practices/ services and the existing challenges of child protection practices.

Furthermore, non-participant observation was also employed in this study. The researcher attempted to record everything relevant - the settings, events, social professions' reactions to events, patterns of contact with abused children, room structure, infrastructure within the room and the intervention process. Interview guides involve the topics and issues to be covered with open-ended interview questions, which elicit the longest answers. The observation checklists contain observational questions important for critical observations.

Data Analysis:

As the data were qualitative, thematic and interpretive data analysis techniques were applied. Thematic analysis techniques were used to analyze data by developing emerging themes and categorizing them. The data were recorded, transcribed verbatim, translated, categorized and sorted by their themes, sources and issues.

Data were assured using the following methods: first, it was emphasized about the quality of the items that were administered via preparation in line with the research objectives and the quality of the tools through careful design and comments by different experts to produce data that is true and accurate. Secondly, data were also enhanced using different data collection methods and techniques, such as in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and non-participant observations. Furthermore, the interview guides were prepared in English and properly transcribed to the local (Amharic) language as appropriate. While conducting the interviews, detailed notes were taken and an audio-recorder was used based on the consent of the participants. Finally, the Amharic audios were transcribed verbatim to Amharic texts and then translated to English, preparing of codebook coded and then thematically analyzed.

Ethical Issues/Considerations:

The consent and the required ethical standards were employed to get the intended information. The data were handled in compliance with the existing guiding principles of Addis

Ababa University's Ethical Guideline. Furthermore, permission was asked from officials of the Addis Ababa Police Commission and Lideta Federal First Instance Court through a support letter written from Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work.

Study participants were treated equally based on gender, age, socio-economic status, and disability. Investigators took all safeguards to avoid coercion of participants by applying voluntary informed consent. All potential participants are made aware at the outset that their participation is voluntary and does not affect their rights in any way. Participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the study and its expected benefits. An appropriate ID replaced participants' names during transcription, and their identity was not disclosed at any time. Hence, trust, confidentiality, anonymity, and respectfulness were established through informed consent. Participants were aware that the study included questions on personal and sensitive topics such as child abuse and neglect, violence against children, child prostitution, child pornography, sex tourism etc. to ensure that all questions were asked in a supportive and non-judgmental manner. Therefore, trust and respectfulness were established through the informed consent of each participant to assure confidentiality.

Results:

This study aimed to explore the child protection practices in Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The major areas of investigation were the key child protection practices; the challenges of child protection practices and the prospects of child protection practices. For this study, a total number of 27 participants were employed. 6 judges (4 males and 2 females) with age intervals of 35–56 years and 8 police officers (3 females and 5 males with age intervals of 25-50) were taken as key-informant interviews. Furthermore, 5 social professionals (2 males and 3 females) with an age interval of 29–35 years, and 8 parents (5 mothers and 3 fathers) with an age interval of 39-60 were taken for in-depth interview participants.

Child Protection Practices: Child protection practices/ services in this subsection include the services provided for children by different bodies, such as parents, legal bodies and social professions. In this regard, one of the mothers of sexually abused children in the Arada sub-city provided her idea as follows:

“My daughter is 12 years old and was raped by a 35-year-old man. With the help of the police officer, I took my daughter to court and started charging. The judge referred my child to the social worker for further assessment. The social worker accepted my daughter in a child-friendly manner and gave counselling services to my daughter. That helped her to be emotionally stable and to express her feelings about how the action was committed to her.”

One of the judges who was the coordinator of the criminal court also stated the child-friendly bench services provided for the children are as follows:

“I have worked for the last 10 years as a judge, of which 5 years, and I have been working in a special child-friendly court dealing with the issues of abused children and offenders. With the help of social professionals, I have provided justice and psychosocial support for abused children and offenders during testimony. “I have accepted witnesses of abused children while social professionals interviewing the children with the use of CCTV Camera connected with our room.”

Father of a 14-year-old sexually abused child disclosed the condition as follows:

“My daughter was sexually abused, and she was highly affected and couldn’t talk. She kept the incident a secret because she was very depressed and did not have awareness of the issue to whom she told. However, a few days later, she became seriously sick and, in the end, I knew the issues through a diagnosis at a health centre. I took the case to court with the help of the police officer. The social worker provided psycho-social support for my daughter. Furthermore, the judge decided for the offender to be sentenced to 18 years.”

One of the police officers shared his experience as follows:

“My colleagues and I have provided awareness-raising campaigns at community levels on how children are protected within the family and community. We have shared our experiences of the crimes and violence that can be committed by children.”

Likewise, another police officer also shared her experiences in this regard:

“I observed an 11-year-old blind boy begging in the street. He is much attenuated paled wearing dirty clothes. He has always begged in the street, and a woman sits near him. Then, I systematically assessed the issue and collected valuable information from the surrounding community. I found that the boy came from a rural area, and had been living with a woman for a year. The women made the boy blind intentionally to beg and used him as a source of income. Then, I arrested her took the case to court and made charges. Finally, the case got a verdict and the woman was sentenced to 27 years, and the boy was taken to the ‘Kolifea’ rehabilitation centre.”

Challenges of Child Protection Practices: According to the information found from participants, there are different challenges to giving child protection practices in the study areas. The father of a sexually abused girl who came to court seeking justice has mentioned the challenges he faced with the justice service:

“We have faced routine postponements (back and forth). We have been on the court for more than one and a half years. Still, my child cannot make a legal decision concerning her mental maintenance. There are overloaded court rolls, inadequate prosecutor preparation and intimidation by defence lawyers.”

A mother of a 12-year-old girl also mentioned the challenges she has faced with child protection practices as follows:

“Nowadays, we have faced serious challenges in protecting our children, because the perpetrators of the children are the family members, relatives, neighbours, teachers and the wider communities. For instance, a 45-year-old man who is my close neighbour committed the rape of my child by tricking her.”

Police officers faced different challenges with child protection practices. Concerning this, one of the police officers who participated in this study at Arada-sub city attested to the following idea:

“One of the big challenges of child protection practices is the loose execution of child protection laws and the lack of continuous follow-up of the case, specifically from parents. Only a few of the crimes committed by children have been reported to our police stations late. This denied the justice system and missed concrete evidence. Victim children do not go to both the health institutions and police stations on time. Thus, it is difficult to know the crimes committed against them.”

Another police officer who was working on child affairs provided his idea:

“Perpetrators intentionally concealed evidence by forcing witnessing individuals not to give testimony. Furthermore, some parents of victim children have reconciled with the perpetrators illegally in terms of money and materials. This has brought serious problems both to the justice system and protection services.”

Another police officer shared her idea concerning the challenges of child protection services for the street as follows:

“Street children were exposed to different maltreatment, particularly for sexual violence. The street children did not have permanent settlements and addresses. This resulted in the offenders not being caught quickly and sometimes even totally escaping. This was one of the main challenges to proper child protection services.”

The social professions explained that there are challenges to providing child protection services, particularly in the court system. A Social Worker at Ledeta Federal First Instance said:

“Abused children who come to court cannot explain themselves, and they do not understand what actions were done to them. For instance, a month ago, a 12-year-old girl was raped and went to our office. The girl could not understand what had happened to her, and she couldn’t explain the situation committed to her. We were having difficulty bringing the case to court for final decisions.”

Good Practices and Future Prospects of Child Protection Practices: Despite the above challenges, there are some good practices and prospects for child protection practices in the study area. One of the judges at Ledeta Federal First Instance Court stated the following point:

“Currently, a child-friendly unit provides psychosocial and legal services for abused children in Addis Ababa. We consider it a good instigation for child protection practices.”

In the same vein, another judge explained that:

“The involvement of social professions is one of the good practices, and helpful for providing effective child protection practices. I believe that this kind of practice should be expanded to other parts of the country.”

Yet another judge stated that:

“Our office is working in coordination with different child care organizations, such as UNICEF, which helps child victims and offenders get materials, food and medical support.”

Another judge shared the current good practices and prospects of child protection practices in the stud area as follows:

“Several NGOs such as the Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE), and UNICEF are working in collaboration with government bodies to meet the rights and best interests of children. In collaborating with these stakeholders, we have taught about child protection practices at public gatherings such as school communities.”

The supervisor of judges in Ledeta Federal First Instance Court stated that:

“There are good practices and prospects for child protection practices in the area, such as treating children through a child-friendly bench, the presence of social work professionals, comfortable and

separated rooms for treating abused children, protective attorney for juvenile delinquents, family bench counselling services, the use of CCTV Camera while the victimized children giving witness.”

Discussion:

The study focused on child protection practices in Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This section focuses on a brief discussion of major findings in light of the literature. Children are exposed to different maltreatments, such as sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, trafficking, hazardous labour, street lives, child marriage, and lack of access to justice, and other forms of maltreatment in countries around the globe (Hopkins, 2013; Save the Children, 2013). Children in Ethiopia are also subjected to verbal, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse, and child labour, which requires collaborative child protection practices and strategies (UN, 2005). Child protection practices involve protecting and campaigning against all forms of discrimination; preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; ensuring immediate access to appropriate services; and providing durable solutions in the child’s best interest (UNICEF, 2023).

Everyone working on child protection practices must keep them safe from different abuses and maltreatment (UNICEF, 2023). According to the U. S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs (Hammond et al., 2001), no single agency has intervened effectively in child abuse cases. No one agency has the sole responsibility for dealing with abused children. The most effective approach to cases involving child maltreatment is interagency coordination. Social professionals, physicians, therapists, prosecutors, judges, police officers etc. have important roles in child protection practices. This is supported by the ecological model/ ecological system theory that child maltreatment is not the result of a single risk factor. A complex interaction of factors is always in play at different levels of society that increases the risk of children becoming victims of maltreatment (Medrano et al., 2012). This implies that both the well-being and the maltreatment of children are influenced by the interactions of family, the community, legal bodies and other professionals.

The major child protection practices/ services in the Arada sub-city involve fulfilling the basic needs, identifying potential harm, responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse, child-friendly bench and justice services, free psycho-social and legal aids services, child maintenance, adoption and custody, and facilitating reintegration of children to their families, etc. According to the findings, families, communities, social professionals, and legal bodies are the major bodies that have a legal right to protect and take care of children.

The families/parents are one of the most important institutions in child protection practices. They have greater roles in child development and well-being by providing basic needs like food, shelter, nurturing, physical and mental support, and the social needs of children. In the study area, parents ensure that children grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and protection from all acts and situations that put the child at risk of neglect, abuse, and maltreatment.

The police officers have participated in child protection practices in the study area alongside families, other professionals and community members. The police have checked those records to see whether there is a history of domestic abuse, sexual offences or any other matter relevant to the welfare of the child. Police officers also provide services like protecting children from beatings, physical attacks, sexual abuse, and psychological attacks. The police officers have purified the crimes committed by the children, arrested the criminals and presented the verdict to the judges.

The judges have provided protective and justice services for children. Children are treated in separate rooms, a protector attorney for juvenile delinquents, child-family bench counselling, psycho-social support, and justice using CCTV cameras. In the Justice System, information shall be provided in a child-friendly manner respecting the child's age, maturity and capacity. In any proceedings affecting a child's rights or interests, the child has a right to get free legal assistance and counselling and experts can assess the maturity, capacity, and wishes of the child to determine the child's best interests (Hopkins, 2013).

At the child-friendly court, the court has designed a special child-friendly unit for social professionals to help abused children and offenders be psychologically stable during court proceedings. Hence, the social professions have provided counselling and training to abused children and offenders. Training and counselling services focus on the meaning of life; ways of resisting peer pressures, attitude changes, anger management and adjustment techniques, self-confidence development, and mechanisms used in restorations from violence and depression. They also facilitated the justice proceeding by interviewing using a CCTV Camera which connected to the court. In addition, social professionals have four main duties in Ledeta Federal First Instance Court. These are custody, treating victim children, juvenile delinquents and adoption.

In support of this, Lucas & Jongman (2017) stated that the roles of social professions as articulated in the new Children's Act include; educating communities about children's issues; working as friends of children's court; investigating and reporting child violence cases to the police officer; application and implementation of child protection order; arranging alternative care for children; facilitating foster care; working with children in conflict with the law; safeguarding children's rights as contained in the bill of rights etc. There are two rehabilitation centres in Addis Ababa: "Kebebe Teshaye"⁴, "Kolifea"⁵ and "Kechene"⁶ diversion centre.

As the findings indicate, different challenges can impede child protection practices in the study area. The second abuse of children, was routine postponements which led to forgetting the cases, the damage to the CCTV camera, sound cutting etc. Studies have shown that complex justice systems, lack of resources, and commitment among responsible actors are identified as major challenges that impede the enforcement of child rights, and implementation of child protection practices in Ethiopia (Tsegaye, 2011).

The other challenges of child protection practices in the study area lack of special restrooms at police stations, loose execution of child protection laws, delay in reporting child abuse cases, absence of valid evidence of child abuse, victims' illegal bargaining with perpetrators, lack of awareness by parents and community to bring cases to the legal bodies and victims' inability to understand and explain the nature of the abuse, the disappearances of street offenders. In the same vein, detrimental and non-stringent laws and policies, inadequate coordination and limited data to monitor the quality of services to children are challenges of child protection practices in Eastern Africa such as Ethiopia (Save the Children, 2013).

Lack of proper and continuous training in social professions, police and judges are also the challenges of child protection practices and service delivery in the study area. The nature of the cases is also another challenge of child protection services. For example, a mother who was sexually abused by her nine-year-old child and a 14-year-old girl who was sexually abused by her father with HIV are the challenges to give appropriate justice.

⁴ both female and male victim children

⁵ only male victim children

⁶ hidden children from their families

Despite the above challenges, there is some good child protection in the study area. The beginning of social professional involvement in court proceedings, the use of CCTV cameras in justice proceedings, the establishment of exclusive child-friendly benches, and the involvement of NGOs are some of the good practices and prospects of child protection practices in the study area.

Conclusion:

Children have been exposed to different maltreatment, including physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, violence against children, and commercial or other exploitation, resulting in greater impacts on their health, survival, development and long-term life. Hence, child protection practice is a broad term used for efforts to safeguard children from actions or situations that place their healthy development and well-being at risk. Children need to be protected because they are physically, mentally and emotionally immature and unable to adequately protect themselves.

In an interdisciplinary way, various concerned bodies include parents, the community, legal bodies, social professionals, and other governmental and NGOs working together to address the psychosocial and legal problems of children. The child protection practices in the study area included the provision of different services, such as psycho-social support, medical support, facilitating the reintegration of victim children to nearby families and taking cases of victim children and offenders to the child-friendly court etc.

Still, these child protection practices are not without challenges. The disappearance of offenders' addresses, particularly those criminals who have lived on the streets, routine postponements, lack of proper and continuous training for professionals, lack of skilled and knowledgeable human powers, the damage to CCTV Camera, low awareness about child protection within parents and the wider communities, the occurrence of loose execution of child protection laws, delay in reporting child abuse cases and absence of valid evidence concerning the abuses, and illegal bargain with perpetrators to resign their cases are some of the challenges in child protection practices in the study area.

The establishment of social professional involvement in the justice systems, the use of special child-friendly bench counselling and justice services, the use of CCTV Camera, the integrated cooperation among prosecutors, police officers, judges, and social professionals, the establishment of child-friendly units, the involvement of NGOs like UNICEF, and Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE) are some of the good practices, and that could bring hopeful and effective child protection practices in future.

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