

## Working at age 13

### *Child labor in Ethiopia*

“At the age of 13, I began working.”

These are the words of Maritu, a 16-year-old Ethiopian girl from Zenzelema village, Ethiopia, who quit school in grade 7 to look for a job. Maritu’s father left her mother and his three daughters, leaving the family in a precarious financial situation.

“The work is extremely difficult and harsh, but I have no option,” said Maritu. “I stopped my education and started working in this painful job to help my mother and two sisters. I have no safety tools and I use my bare hands for both breaking and moving stones. There is no shelter, restroom, or water throughout the day. I suffer from pain in my hands, shoulders and back.”

Maritu is not alone—approximately 80 percent of Ethiopian youth are out of school by age 15, early marriage limits girls’ opportunities, and poor economic conditions means even those with an education cannot find a job in the formal sector. This leaves youth either working unpaid on family farms (67 percent of children<sup>1</sup>) or in the worst forms of child labor in domestic service, agriculture, textiles, agriculture, fishing, and mining (like Maritu).<sup>2</sup>

“At the age of 13, I began working for one of the stone crushing companies in Zenzelema,” she said. “I was responsible for breaking large, mined stones into smaller parts and carrying them to the crushing machine, for further mechanical molding. For two years, I worked for nine hours a day, 23 days a month, with only a 30-minute lunch break, earning 35 Ethiopian Birr (\$1.60 USD) daily.”



*Maritu at catering training in Bahir Dar Polytechnic College.*

World Vision’s U.S. Department of Labor-funded Engaged, Educated, Empowered, Ethiopian Youth (E4Y) project set up child labor registration committees in early 2016 to identify children engaged

<sup>1</sup> “Research on documentation of workplace hazards and how to regulate standards in the informal sector in central and southern Ethiopia”, University of Gondar, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Guarcello, L., Lyon, S., & Rosati, F. *The Twin Challenges of Child Labor and Youth Employment in Ethiopia*. UCW (Understanding Children’s Work), 2006.

in harmful or dangerous forms of labor. Maritu was registered and enrolled in E4Y's educational summer camp program to help her develop career skills. The project then facilitated entrepreneurship and career guidance training for Maritu, through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs, which helped her to identify and choose decent employment. Maritu and other registered youth are given the choice to pursue completing their education or to train in a vocation.

Through E4Y, World Vision works closely with International Rescue Committee, the University of Gondar and the Center for Creative Leadership. The project's work is based on participatory child labor, market and gender assessments, community focus groups and consultations with the government of Ethiopia. Ultimately, E4Y will support 12,000 youth, including 6,500 female youth and 400 youth with disabilities, aged 14-17. An additional 10,000 youth, in target communities, will receive support to reach their educational potential, develop marketable skills to secure decent work and serve as leaders in their communities. In addition, 7,500 vulnerable households of these youth will be enabled to improve livelihoods and gain access to social protection services.

Thus far, 1,885 youth who were out of school and engaged in child labor have graduated from TVET, after acquiring marketable skills training of their own choosing. World Vision continues to support the graduates by linking them with business owners in their communities to obtain jobs and by supporting them to create their own businesses if they prefer, through entrepreneurship and business start-up kit support. Maritu is one of these—she stopped working at the stone crushing company and attended vocational training at the leading technical college of Amhara region, Bahir Dar Polytechnic College. She now works as a cook in a three star hotel.

"I am really happy with Maritu," said the hotel manager. "She works quickly and our customers are always happy to see her. She learns quickly and I think she will progress to the next level and become a chef, making her family very proud."

"This was only possible with the help of the E4Y project," said Maritu, with a smile.

*World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.*

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