

# Community participation in the reintegration of children on the move

A participatory evaluation | FSCE Ethiopia

## About FSCE

The Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE) was established in 1989 with the goal of supporting disadvantaged children from urban settings. Over the years, FSCE has become a leading non-governmental organisation in Ethiopia, focusing on child rights, protection, and empowerment. Its achievements include establishing child protection units within police departments, child courts, and community-based multi-purpose child protection centres.

## Project evaluated: Community participation in the reintegration of children on the move

FSCE works to reintegrate children on the move in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Children are intercepted at bus stations, and reintegrated into their families and communities with the active participation of local stakeholders. FSCE has worked to engage the community in the work of the Anti-Child Trafficking Committee (ACTC), in order to enhance community ownership of child protection issues and to reinforce community capacity to combat child trafficking.

Project activities included:

- Training for ACTC members on child trafficking, case management, and referral systems.
- Community discussions on child protection.
- Outreach and post-reunification support for reintegrated children.
- Advocacy to incorporate child protection measures into local government programmes.



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## Participatory evaluation plan

In order to measure the effectiveness of community engagement in reintegrating children, the participatory evaluation focused on:

- Medium-term outcomes such as the reintegration of 350 children.
- The training of ACTC members and enhancement of community awareness.
- Systemic changes seen at community and policy levels.



## Tools selected

- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): These were conducted with ACTC members, bus drivers, and community members.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIs): These were held with government officials, ACTC members, and FSCE staff.
- Document analysis: Project records and progress reports were reviewed.
- Observation checklists: These were used to assess interception units and child protection measures at bus stations.

## Evaluation outcomes

- **Community ownership:** FSCE saw active involvement of grassroots organisations, including bus associations, community police, and women's groups, which created a robust support system.
- **Successful reintegration:** 350 children were effectively reintegrated into their families with post-reunification support.
- **Policy impact:** Advocacy activity led to restrictions being placed on children's movement without documentation in source areas, which reduces trafficking risks.
- **Awareness and training:** Community discussions and training activities improved public knowledge of child protection issues, which reduces the risk of exploitation.
- **Sustainability:** Local community members pledged ongoing support for child protection initiatives.

## Lessons learnt

- Community ownership is a cornerstone of success: The project demonstrated that when communities take ownership of issues, the results are sustainable and impactful. Community members, such as bus drivers, security staff, and local leaders, became active participants in identifying, preventing, and addressing child trafficking.
- Grassroots collaboration amplifies impact: The project utilised grassroots organisations to combat child trafficking, mobilise resources, and influence systemic change. Once perceived



as part of the problem, bar owners and brokers became allies by reporting cases and stopping underage worker employment.

- **Advocacy and awareness drive systemic and behavioural change:** The committee's advocacy efforts and awareness initiatives have led to significant changes in combating child trafficking, despite authorities' lack of documentation. The community has mobilised 300 members to recognise risks, change attitudes and participate in prevention and reintegration initiatives.
- **Tailored training and root cause analysis empower sustainable solutions:** The ACTC has improved its child protection capacity through tailored training sessions, focusing on trafficking causes, case management, and referral processes. Police officers conduct proactive patrols, identifying at-risk children and referring them to FSCE's Safe Home, leading to preventive measures.
- **Transparency builds trust and mobilises support:** The committee's transparent operations fostered trust among community members, leading to increased participation and contributions. Community members pledged financial support, with some committing to monthly contributions of up to 500 Birr to sustain the initiative.
- **Resource mapping and utilisation strengthen sustainability:** The committee mapped resources to identify local assets and partnerships, effectively leveraging them to sustain child protection efforts beyond external support. Community members showed that even modest financial or material contributions could result in meaningful and impactful outcomes.
- **Inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement ensures sustainable child protection:** Police, health workers, community leaders, and government officials have collaborated against child trafficking, expanding the project's reach and integrating child protection into local governance, ensuring continuity and amplifying its impact.

**“The committee’s success is attributed to the active involvement of the community in recognising challenges as their own and committing to resolving them” - project participant**

## Conclusion

FSCE's project on reintegrating children on the move illustrates the power of participatory, community-led approaches. The initiative achieved tangible outcomes in child protection by fostering trust, transparency, and collaboration. The lessons learnt underscore the importance of embedding such models into governmental structures to ensure sustainability. Future efforts should continue to leverage community resources and advocate for systemic change, ensuring long-term support for vulnerable children.

### CONTACT DETAILS

To find out more about the work of FSCE please contact:  
[www.fsc-e.org](http://www.fsc-e.org)  
[tesfabilen2719@gmail.com](mailto:tesfabilen2719@gmail.com)



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