

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN

**THE  
COMMUNITY  
AND FAMILY  
HEALTH  
TEAM**

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

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A woman with a green headwrap and a young child sitting together on a bench. The woman is wearing a patterned shawl and looking directly at the camera. The child is wearing a brown jacket and looking slightly to the side. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVES

Yetimwork Abebe





Yetimwork Abebe, 37, lives in a rental house with her husband and 3 children. She attends various meetings in her kebele and is a member of the local women development group with 29 other members. She says she knows of various problems in her community, and appreciates the role of the Family Health Team in trying to address them.

“Thank God, things have improved lately” says Yetimwork speaking about the service provision in health facilities. She says Hana and the other Family Health Team members, told her a lot about health care, hygiene and sanitation, and advised the women in her community to give birth in health facilities.

“My 3 years old baby used to get sick almost every day,” says Yetimwork. She added that the Family Health Team advised her on how to take care of him and gave her a referral letter to take him to the health center. This is part of the Family Health Team’s role in promoting child, adolescent and women’s health.





WHEN THE  
GOING GETS  
TOUGH, **THE**  
**TOUGH GETS**  
**GOING**

Zemedu Molla

“I cannot thank her enough for everything she does to me,” says: Zemedede Molla, 29, with a warm glance to Tigist: the young Family Health Team member, sitting next to her. She recalled the time where Tigist gave her basic advice on hygiene, HIV treatment and care.

Zemedede lives in a shanty house on the street around Woreda 13 in the area known as Gerji. She washes people’s clothes every now and then to feed her husband and four children. “There were times I used to cry the whole day” says Zemedede. She has been living with HIV for the last ten years, but all her children are healthy and strong. The Family Health Team gave her psychosocial support, including adherence support for HIV treatment.

Zemedede used to live in a rented house. “Things were tough and I was not free to do what I wanted to do there”, says Zemedede. She stressed how difficult it is to live on the street but said she is now grateful as she can at least see and discuss her problems with the Family Health Team.

The Family Health Team has helped Zemedede to recover from her illness and still follows up her progress. Tigist and the other Family Health Team members visit her even after their regular working hours. “I wish my husband cares about me as much as they do” says Zemedede.

One of the major activities of Family Health Team at the community level includes providing information and education to communities and households on a range of health and related matters and offering psychosocial support

Although Zemedede gets basic education and support on use of latrine from the Family Health Team, She still has to use her neighbors’ latrine and pay 20 birr to get clean water.

She asks for continuous follow up and further support for those like her. As the new school year approaches, Zemedede says she is still strong and will keep on working hard to help her children and send them to school.





THEY MEAN  
**'EVERYTHING'**  
TO HER

Berhane Regassa



26 years old Berhane has a serious heart disease and usually stays home with her daughter. As she tells what sister Mirinda and the rest of the Family Health Team members do in her community. Her answer was precise “Everything!” “Everything you see in our neighborhood is the result of what sister Mirinda taught us” added Berhane.

As the leader of the one to five development group, Berhane organized people in her community and built toilets and waste disposal spots. They also clean their neighborhood regularly.

Berhane lives in Gerji ketena 5 commonly known as Selam Sefer. The Family Health Team has already become a family to many people living in that neighborhood. According to Berhane, the community informs the team whenever there are sick people in their area and the Family Health Team members immediately come to check whether the person should be referred to a health center.

“I have a monthly income of 1500 ETB because my husband is working” said Berhane. She tells a story of her neighbor who lives next door with her two children. “She lost her husband a long time ago, and has no income to feed her children” said Berhane. She recalled a time where her neighbour had to take the ART without eating food for a long time and got seriously sick.

Berhane calls for free curative services from the Family Health Team. She wishes to see the Family Health Team carrying free medicine to be given to the people in her community



**MOTHER**  
WALKING  
HER SON'S  
**SILENT TALK**

Ateref Getaneh

It was on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, 2008 that the life of Ateref changed for the worse. Her son, who was a grade ten student back then, got into a car accident as he came back home. He has been paralyzed since then.

Ateref, 58, says her son cannot speak, walk or control himself. “I have to feed him, change his bedsheets as he doesn’t have bladder control.” said Ateref.

Ateref lives in a small house with her two children. She doesn’t have any income except for some donations she get from different people. To make things worse, Ateref herself suffers from serious hypertension.

Sister Betselot, a member of the Family Health Team, gives basic health education to Ateref and the other women in the community about hygiene and sanitation. Ateref also mentioned that the health officer once came and measured her blood pressure.

She said it makes her happy to see the Family Health Team checking her son. “As good as this is...” said Ateref, “I want my child to get the necessary medical support.” Ateref also asks for more free medical equipment; such as, disposable bed sheets for her son.





HIGH HOPES  
**AGAINST**  
LIMITED MEANS


Alem Alebachew

Alem Alebachew, 38 lost her husband because of HIV. She lives in her house on 500 birr monthly income from rent she collects by leasing one small room in her compound. “This one room is all I got.” says Alem.

According to her own words, she would have been dead like her husband as she was unaware of HIV treatment and care before the implementation of the Family Health Team. “I now take my medicine properly, and take care of myself thanks to sister Belaynesh” said Alem.

Sister Belaynesh and her Family Health Team mates provide basic health education about hygiene, sanitation, HIV treatment and care, as well as family planning and the use of contraceptives.



A photograph of a woman with a white headwrap and a yellow shawl, holding a young child in a blue patterned jacket. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

CALLING  
FOR MORE  
**MATERNAL  
INTERVENTION**

Adey Asmamaw



Adey is a 37 years old woman with three children. She was previously divorced and remarried her current husband. Her youngest baby boy is HIV positive. "My husband and I are both HIV positive but my husband hasn't started the ART medicine yet" says Adey.

She lives in her own house and sells Injera to feed her children. Her two children born from her previous marriage are both HIV negative. "Sister Tsedey told me about HIV treatment and care" says Adey. She follows up on her medical status and makes sure her son gets the necessary treatment. Adey also dug a temporary toilet in her compound as per the advice she got from the Family Health Team.

Tsedey mentioned the Family Health Team is beneficial for people like her, but calls for more comprehensive support to be able to send her children to school and pay for her babies medical expenses.



# LEADING UNDER STIGMA

Atsede Bedane

A 50 years old widow, Atsede Bedane is still suffering from stigma in her neighborhood because she is HIV positive. She said the only visitors she gets her from the Family Health Team.

Atsede lives in her house with her three sons and two daughters. As she is the leader of the 1 to 5 development group in her community, she works with people to clean her neighborhood and make sure they live in a healthy area.

The Family Health Team follows up with her every week. She feeds her children by cleaning peoples' houses. "I can't do that anymore" says Atsede with a gloomy face. Her medical condition worsened over the last winter and she was forced to stop working. "The Family Health team helps me a lot. The nurses even give me money to buy food for my children" said Atsede.

The psychological support from the Family Health Team is helping Atsede recover quickly. She said the nurses are like her daughters. "None of my children are treating me like they do" said Atsede. She is following up on her latest problems at the health center and she hopes to feel better and start working again.





# NEEDY SPEAKING FOR NEEDY MOTHER

Meseret Wosene



In a small plastic house on a street around Gerji, 34 years old Meseret can be seen making and selling traditional grass woven plates to feed herself and her three children, aged 14, 12 and 3.

Meseret gets basic health education on personal hygiene, sanitation, and HIV prevention and control from Sister Haimanot and the rest of the Family Health Team who visits her every two weeks. An HIV patient herself, Meseret said she takes care of herself, takes her medicine properly, and works hard to make sure her children remain strong and healthy. “Thank God my children are HIV negative” said Meseret.

Meseret said she is now very aware of personal and environmental health. She knows about proper and healthy ways of waste disposal, the need to wash hands after using the toilet and prevention of communicable diseases such as TB.

Meseret has been registered as an Indigent in her Kebele, and as such gets free health services from the health center. Her mother doesn't have this privilege, and Meseret had to pay for her during her recent visit to the health center. “I know there are many others like my mother who need free health care services” said Meseret. She asks the government and partners to make sure everybody gets free health care services.



# THE WILL TO LIVE TRIUMPHING OVER THE DESIRE TO DIE

Feleku Reta

“You wouldn’t have recognized me if you came here few months back. I was pale and dark.” Says Feleku Reta, a 39 years old widow with two children.

Feleku didn’t know she was HIV positive until her husband passed away. Her late husband had learned he was positive and was using ART without her knowledge.

Life has become more challenging for Feleku and her two children since the bread winner of the family passed away. The two children, aged 15 and 5, are both HIV negative. Feleku said she is glad her children are healthy. “There were times I planned to kill myself” said Feleku.

After the Family Health Team started visiting her, Feleku started feeling much stronger and healthier. “I used to get sick almost every week. After the frequent visits by the Family Health Team, our neighborhood is cleaner and I am feeling much better” added Feleku.

Feleku pays 300ETB every month for a small room she lives in with her children. She washes clothes for people in her neighborhood to feed her children and pay rent. There were times when the Family Health Team collected money from the community to feed Feleku and her two children. “The Family Health Team help us a lot” said Feleku. She added “They should also get some help”

# WELCOMING MORE CONTRACEPTIVE OPTIONS

Asnakech Berhanu

Asnakech's story emphasizes the need for the Family Health Team to work more with women. "I saw the advantages myself," says Asnakech.

Asnakech, 26, is married and has no children yet. She said she is planning to have her first baby after a year.

The Family Health Team has been visiting Asnakech's neighborhood for three consecutive weeks and she attended all of the health education sessions. She mentioned she is now well aware about HIV and TB, emergency medical care and family planning.

According to Asnakech, the biggest lesson for her was about the various types of contraceptives. She used to suffer from the side effects of the contraceptives she used. After she learned about the other types of contraceptives, she now feels healthy and comfortable.



Asnakech now calls for a more integrated effort through the Family Health Team, specifically focusing on women. "I know there are women, even in my women development group who desperately need these services" added Asnakech.





# WANTING TO BE THE LAST SUFFERER

Tigist Mesfin



Tigist Mesfin, 37, lost her husband three years ago and now lives with her three children. She sells “Injera” to earn money to send her children to school. “We used to think children were gifts from God, and I never used contraceptives.” says Tigist.

Tigist says she learned important lessons about child care, hygiene and sanitation from the Family Health Team. Tigist and the women in her neighborhood had community meetings and conversations where education and promotion on comprehensive hygiene and sanitation issues was provided by the Family Health Team.

“Sister Haimanot and her team members come to our house and teach us a lot” says Tigist. The home visits by the Family Health Team include education and support on solid and liquid waste management, family planning and contraceptives. Tigist regrets not using any contraceptives and having children she now can’t raise. She is telling the women in her community to use contraceptives and family planning services “It’s heartbreaking to have three children and not to be able to send them to school” added Tigist. “I want to make sure that no woman in my community goes through what I have been through”

Tigist has benefited a lot from the home visits by the Family Health Team. She mentioned she has gone to health facilities after being referred for advanced care at the health centers.





MAY BE  
**MORE THAN  
ENOUGH**

Bizuye Bayu

“No! I have had enough!” said Bizuye 27 when asked whether she plans to have more children. She already has three children, aged 9, 4 and an infant who is sleeping quite on her grandmother’s back.

Bizuye lives in Woreda 13, commonly known as Concern area. She lives in a rented house with no access to clean water. She said the Family Health Team told her about communicable diseases, vaccination, family planning and the use of birth control. She took their words seriously and is now using contraceptives. “I don’t have any plan to give birth to another child” said Bizuye. Her husband is a daily laborer and the only bread winner in the house. It’s now becoming more difficult to feed her children.

Bizuye mentioned people like her with low incomes need free access to health care services like those provided by the Family Health Team.

***DISCLAIMER:***

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation





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