

Success story



My Name is *Chaltu*, I am 13 years old, I live in Tulu Bolo Town. I am a member of ODA Adolescent and youth sexual reproductive health club. I was in my classroom following my education when I had my period for the first time and I was in a lot of pain. I was not comfortable telling what is happening to me to my classmate friend sitting next to

me and my teacher. Then after ten minutes I stand from where I was sitting and try to leave class but blood was all over my cloth and on the floor. I was not wearing any pads because I did not know. The students saw the blood and told my teacher. They took me to our School menstrual hygiene management corner constructed by Oromia Development Association.

It is currently providing truly exciting services for so many female students. Our school ODA focal person and MHMC representative student took me in with a smile and start giving me counseling. I got water, soap, pads and underwear. They told me all female faces this cycle and it is a normal fact of life given by God, then I started to calm down. I took a rest on the sleeping place prepared at the corner until I recover from the pain.

Finally, I returned back to class and attended the remaining period. Now, I know menstrual cycle is natural gift and started to create awareness for other female students.

Currently I am a model student and I give counseling for other students on



how to manage their menstrual cycle at school and help students get services at sanitary corner of the school. As a final point, I want to thank ODA for constructing menstrual hygiene management corner at our school and for equipping it with a sanitary napkin from time to time.

ODA-AYSRH Coordinator,
Tulu Bolo

STORY OF GELMO



Gelmo is a 15 years old girl. She is a student who lives in Fentalle Woreda and she lives with her family. Fentalle is found in Eastern Shewa of Oromia Region, it is one of the hottest areas of the country. Mostly pastoralist people of Kereyu live in the area and Gelmo is one of them. She has one brother and her father is not alive so the bread winner of the Family is her mother. Gelmo had been in Turo primary school since 2009 EC. Her family is poor they don't have enough money to support themselves.

Gelmo took Comprehensive Life skill Education training. After finishing the training she became a member of Reproductive Health club when she was in grade 5. She was also a member of ODA Club of Volunteerism. She grew up physically by the time she was 15 years old. She looks like she is old enough to get married. Considering her vulnerability (loss of her father) a man age 70 planned to take her as his 3rd wife.

This old man paid 20,000 birr as a dowry. When she gets back from school she heard rumors that her mother and relatives has decided to marry her off. As soon as she heard this news Gelmo remembered what she learned in school through CLSE by ODA focal person and she decided to say no to the proposal.

The man who already gave a dowry started to take advantage of Gelmo as his wife letting her miss school. She made sure that the marriage will by no means take place and decided to escape. She already knew whenever they face challenges they go to school and inform Focal teachers. Gelmo informed what is going on in her life to the Focal person.



The teacher told her to stay calm and decided to contact her mother and realized things are a little bit out of hand. The focal person decided to inform the issue to the school Head Master. After discussion and observing her commitment they decided to help her. She said *“I have learned that I have the right to decide whom I marry in my CLSE training, even if my mom want to give me to this old*

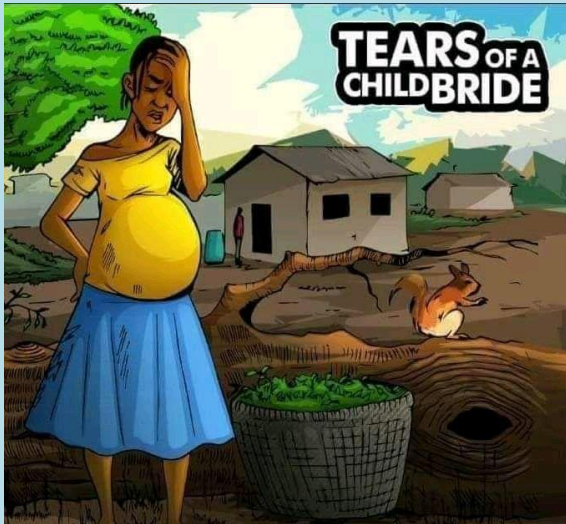
man she has to ask my consent she said. In other way I heard as marrying at a very young age brings different complication on my reproductive health status so I am ready to die than marrying this old man.”

The area was under problem of security, school Head Master has decided to involve police and took Gelmo to Alge command post security officer where they insisted him to take her out and go to Fentalle Police station fearing of forced marriage and further problem from the man who wants to marry her. The school head master said *“I decided to rescue her taking all risk because we have been teaching our students not to accept early marriage so we need to be by their side when they come to us to protect them.”*

Gelmo confidently defended her right in front of the legal bodies at woreda. As soon as she came to Metehara, Woreda Advisory Committee came together by the help of AYSRH/Project Coordinator at Fentalle and he presented the issue. Direction was given to the police to bring the person who paid 20,000 for her mother and her mother too.

The man then refused to come and her mother presented at Police station and gave her words saying *“According to our tradition once the girl’s parents are asked for their daughter’s hand in marriage and her parents received dowry, she is not her families anymore, she has to marry the person. So I will not agree to defend her and keep her in school since I received dowry.”*

The security problem prevailed in Turo kebele, the Militias' were unable to bring in the suspected person to the police and they were following the case. Fearing for her safety if she gets back to the village she was told to stay at volunteer police who at the time works on Gender. After two month ODA Woreda office and WAC started fund raising and rented a house for her. Gelmo has got an opportunity to start her class again at Metehara Primary school under follow up of her relatives and police.



AYSRH project Coordinator at Fentalle woreda who played a vital role in helping her escape early marriage said *“We teach them their reproductive health right and motivate them to perform in their class in good manner. So after knowing their right students won’t accept what hurt them, that is why Gelmo run to her teacher in time of problem. We decided to protect her and be an example for other girls in the village.”* Thanks to all team and sectors who helped her, she is currently in grade 7 at Metehara primary school. She said she wants to join Boarding School and help her

community to come out of tradition that affects girls. Her mother has understood the problem early marriage brings and decided to return back the dowry. To restrain challenges among community and help them understand the negative impacts of harmful traditional practices ODA community Dialogue session is being on action at kebele’s. Let us all work in collaboration to reduce early marriage and keep our girls in school.

*ODA/AYSRH project
Fentalle Woreda*



Gabi Award

Oromia Development Association is doing a lot of community based programs on Health, Education, Environmental Protection, Provision of Clean water and strengthening volunteerism to change lives of our community. AYSRH or Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health being one of ODA's community based health program, it improves **maternal health**, interventions to prevent teenage pregnancy, child marriage and STI. It **aims to improve reproductive health status of youth through accessing youth with age appropriate RH information and service. Which it includes** interventions to prevent teenage pregnancy, child marriage and STI

At the end of every school year there is a program called Parents day. It is harvest time for both the teachers and students. It takes place in the month of July every year. It is a small ceremony where every student's parents are invited, and it is must for the students to be present because it's the day they collect their report card. They have coffee ceremony, music, short drama, poem, Question and answer competition on Life skill Education or Reproductive health.



One of the most interesting parts of this parent day ceremony is **Gabi Award**. ODA/AYSRH intervention area is 24 Districts/240 primary schools in Oromia

region/Ethiopia. For the past six years ODA has bought 4,320 Gabi's. The primary school (240) selects three of its best girl students based on their academic performance of that year and awards the parent Gabi and the girls Reference Book.

Gabi is a white handmade blanket kind of clothing made out of cotton, worn mostly by elderly. It is loosely draped over the shoulders and upper body.

As I have mentioned earlier one of AYSRH's activity is Delaying Early Marriage. Early Marriage has shown significant decline over the years but it is still one of the harmful traditional practices that take place in our country and millions of girls still remain at risk.

As a culture parents normally get Gabi from their girls once she gets married. But now thanks to ODA-AYSRH program parents are given Gabi for the academic success of their daughters. ODA not only gives Gabi, we create awareness on why girls should not get married early on that day. Girls who are married early are unlikely to be in school and get education to make informed decision about their health. Early marriage can cause poverty, lose their right to education, risk of miscarriage, abortion/or even death and economic insecurity

The main aim of these Gabi Award which is a platform of ODA is to encourage parents to send their girls to school, not let them get married early. We have witnessed some of the parents feel so emotional and cry when their girls put Gabi on their shoulder. It is always an honor for parents to see their kids Success.



These past two years Gabi we gave is Abba Gada Gabi, which holds deep cultural significance for Oromo community. Abba Gada Gabi has woven color of regional flag which is Black, Red and White.



These all colors have their own representation in our society. They represent the Future, the present and the past. Gada system does not support early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation. So giving them this significant Gabi is a reminder of what the Gabi ceremony really stands for.

Unity For Development.