



## LEARNING AGENDA REPORT

# **The Role of Child Centered Social for Social Inclusion of Children and Families Most Impacted by Inequality and Discrimination**

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Conducted by Child Rights Governance (CRG) Team,

Ethiopia Country Office



**Save the Children**

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## Executive Summary

The main objective of the study was to generate evidence on the contribution of social accountability with children intervention for social inclusion of children and families most impacted by inequality and discrimination; and draw lessons and recommendations for future interventions to improve the lives of socially excluded children and their families.

The study employed a descriptive design applying largely qualitative method. Data were collected from 31 adults (19 members of the artisan community, 12 members of the child centered social accountability groups), and 15 children purposefully selected from three intervention areas (Kebena Woreda, Butajira and Wolkite towns) in Guraghe Zone. The primary and secondary data were analysed using qualitative approach (thematic analysis). Issues were categorized to form different themes which essentially answer the learning agenda (questions).

The study revealed that children and their families from the artisan communities faced a long-standing exclusion from participating in social affairs and denied of economic opportunities (adults) and children were deprived of their rights. Analysing the child rights context, members of the child centered social accountability groups identified children and their families as citizens facing discrimination by the mainstream society. To support children and their families, they conducted awareness raising programs on the rights of children and their families. They involved women and men from the artisan families in social accountability structures and conducted advocacy efforts targeting the district and Zone government departments to improve access to social services for children. As a result, men and women from artisan families can join community-based social groups such as 'Iddirs' and participate in local community meetings organized by the local government structures. Artisan families are being integrated through intermarriages with non-artisan community members. Furthermore, significant number of children from artisan families are enrolled in primary schools and have opportunities to socialize with other children.

**Lessons learnt:** social accountability with children has contributed to addressing the deep-rooted social exclusion of the children and their families and fostered attitudinal and practical changes in treating children and adults from the artisan families. The program has improved accountability of the Zonal and District authorities to improve the lives of children from artisan families.

**Recommendations:** Design and implement an integrated intervention to address the socio-economic, health and protection rights of artisan families; ensure these families and their children benefit from social protection programs so that parents can send their children to school; support children's participation in child-led structures and train children in soft skills. Furthermore, teachers need to take additional efforts to ensure positive treatment of children from artisan families in school setting. They can do by conducting continuous awareness raising in schools to reducing or stopping discriminatory practices against children from artisan families and enforcing school rules and regulations.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

All SCI countries are required to have a Country Learning Agenda identifying strategic knowledge and evidence gaps relating to the country office sets out the priority questions for each thematic sector to generate evidence current country strategy (2022-2024). The research, evidence, and learning (REL) that we generate must be strategic, rigorous, and useful if it is to drive more impactful programming and advocacy and help to deliver our Breakthroughs.

SC and CSO partners have been implementing child centered social accountability (CCSA) as a tool to facilitate social dialogue between community members including children and service providers and duty bearers to improve delivery. One of the benefits of using social accountability is that it creates space for dialogue on issues of discrimination against groups of children and find ways to address such exclusion contributing to deprivation of enjoying their rights. However, there is an evidence gap on how social accountability programming has contributed for social inclusion of a community most impacted by inequality and discrimination. This research was conducted to fill the evidence gap on how social accountability helped to reduce the barriers for social inclusion of children from socially excluded community groups, including access to education and other social services. In view of the above rationale, the Child Rights Governance thematic sector has identified two learning agenda (questions) that must be answered for 2023. The learning agenda (question) is “How has Child Centered Social Accountability (CCSA) contributed for social inclusion of a community most impacted by inequality and discrimination (the artisan community groups, including children)?” It answers how the social accountability helped to reduce the barriers for social inclusion of children belonging to socially excluded community groups.

## 1.2 Objectives of study

This study was conducted to address the following research objectives.

- To generate evidence on the contribution of social accountability with children intervention for social inclusion of children and families most impacted by inequality and discrimination. The study documented how the social accountability initiatives enabled children from artisan community groups to have access to education.
- To draw lessons learnt and recommendations for future interventions to improve the lives of socially excluded children and their families.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Study Design

The study employed a descriptive design applying largely qualitative method. This approach was chosen since the overall purpose was to generate evidence how children and their families faced social exclusion before intervention, describe the mechanisms of social accountability interventions that helped to address the social exclusion, and the changes in the situation of children and their families.

### 2.2 Sampling Method and Sample Size

Both primary and secondary data were collected from implementing CSO partner (Guraghe People's Self-help Development Organization), members of the child-centered social accountability groups, and children. Data were collected from 31 adults (45% female) and 15 children (53.3% females) that were purposefully selected from three intervention areas (Kebena Woreda, Butajira and Wolkitie towns) in Guraghe Zone. Of the total 31 adult respondents, 19 (9 females) were members of the artisan community groups and the remaining were from non-artisan community members. Of the total participants, 12 (5 females) were members of the child centered social accountability groups. Key informants include government officials, community leaders, CSO representatives, community leaders, women from artisan communities, and children.

### 2.3 Data Collection Method

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered from children (members of the social accountability and child-led groups), adult men and women both from artisan families and mainstream community members, government officials, and representatives of the CSOs using focus group discussion and key informant interviews. Secondary data were collected by reviewing partner's annual reports, documentations from the social accountability groups, and schools.

### 2.4 Ethical Procedures

Respecting ethical principles is critical for safeguarding the study participants. The study participants were informed about the purpose of study and the ultimate purpose of the results. Participants were also clearly informed about their right to refuse to take part, terminate the interview or discussion at any point or not answering any question. For adults, verbal consent was received from each study participant before interviews or discussions. Further, all child safeguarding procedures were followed before children were involved in the study. Interviews and discussions were conducted in settings that ensure the privacy of respondents. The researcher assured to the participants that all information gathered would be strictly confidential. Generally, the study was conducted by adhering to the Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and code of conduct.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

The study employed a qualitative data analysis method. Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were documented and analyzed. Notes taken during discussions aided transcription. To answer the research questions, thematic analysis was used, in which issues were categorized to answer the research questions. Individual narratives depicting the situation of children and their families prior to the intervention, specific initiatives implemented, and the outcomes of the interventions are described. The qualitative data were supported by direct quotes from respondents.

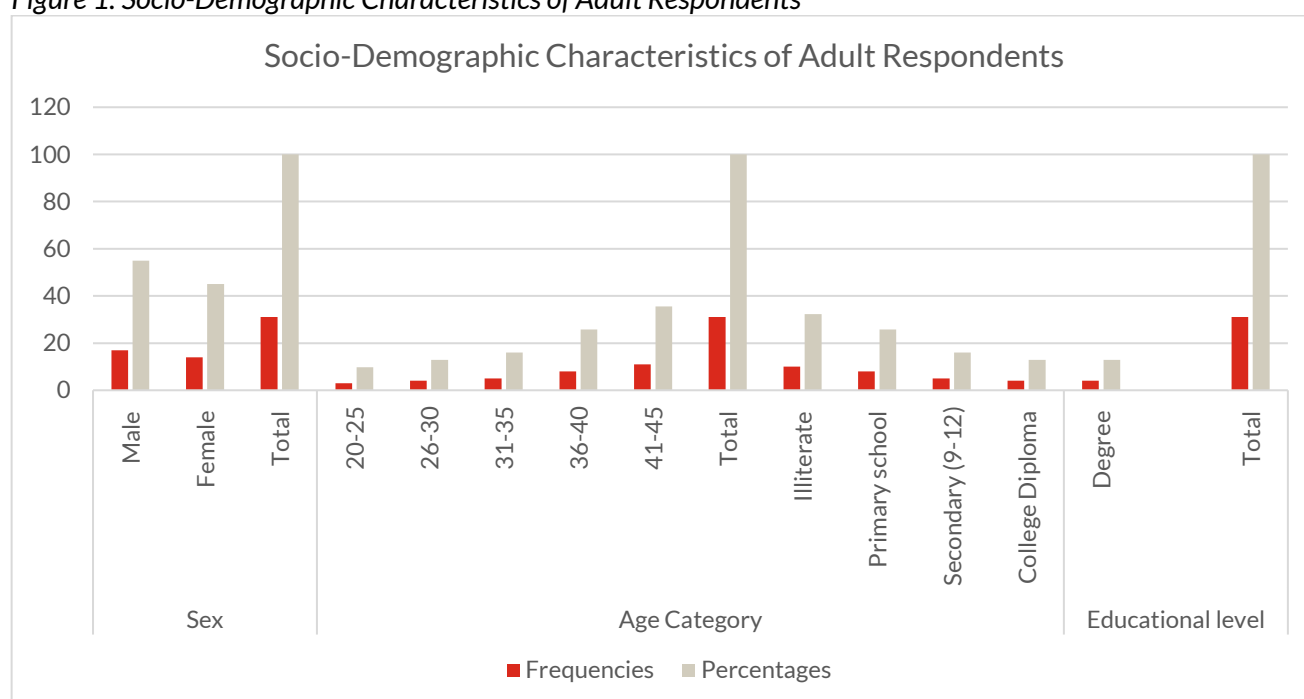
# 3. Findings and Discussions

## 3.1 Demographic Data & Respondent Characteristics

Two focus group discussions (one with participants from artisan community groups and one with members of the child-centered social accountability groups) were conducted. A total of 31 adults (55% male and 45% female) participated in the focus group discussions. Their age ranges from 20-45, with 35.5% aged 41-45, 25.8% range from 36-40, 16% were aged between 31-35, 12.9% ages 26-30, and quite few (9.7%) aged 20-25-year-old. As to their educational level, 32.3% of the respondents were illiterate, 25.8% have attended primary education, 16% attended secondary education, and equal proportion (12.9% each) have completed college diploma and degree programs.

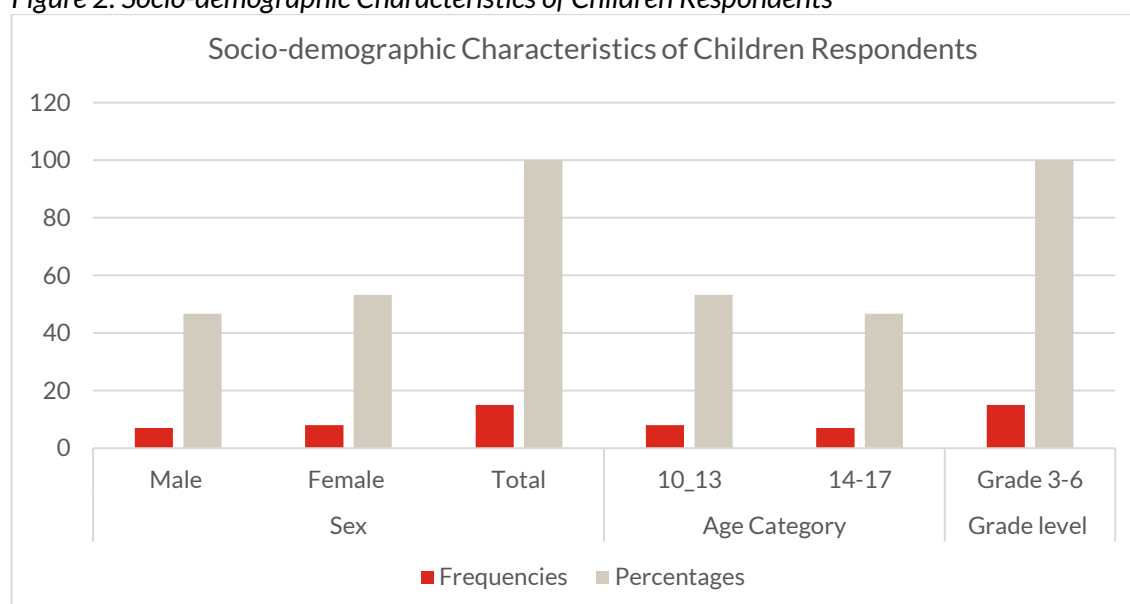
Of the total adult respondents, 19 (9 females) were members of the artisan community groups; and 12 (5 females) are members of the child centered social accountability groups.

Figure 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Adult Respondents



Looking into the demographic characteristics of children respondents, 46.7 % were male and 53.3 % were female. Looking into their age category, 53.3% of fall within the age category of 10-13-year-old and 46.7% were between age 14-17 years. All the respondent children were attending primary education (grades 3-6).

Figure 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Children Respondents



### 3.2 Situation of children from artisan families before intervention

In many parts of Ethiopia including Guraghe Zone in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regions (SNNPRs), there are most socially excluded community groups called artisan community. The artisan community members are skilled handicraft workers who make or create material objects partly or entirely by hand. They are engaged in pottery, blank smith, tannery, clothing, making of household items and tools. People belonging to the artisan community are given a derogatory name called 'Fuga' in Guraghe Zone. The term 'fuga' is given to those people who are engaged in the above-mentioned activities, people not having rights, those who do not own land, and are labelled as a community group with low social status. They are generally perceived as having evil eyes by the society.

People belonging to the artisan community have a long history of social exclusion. Due to the societal exclusion, adults, youth, and children belonging to this community have accepted their low social status, they feel inferior to others, and this has negatively impacted their access to social and economic opportunities. One of the focus group participants from the artisan community groups stated "Our community has a longstanding experience of social exclusion. Non-artisan community members used to undermine children, youth and adults belonging to our community".

#### 3.2.1 Accepted low social status as their identity

Most focus group discussants affirmed that everyone who belongs to this community have accepted this identity in that they are naturally or inherently different social groups from other community members. People from artisan community groups have intense personal feelings of inadequacy which results in the belief that they are some ways deficient or inferior to others. These people believe that they are not born to be equals to the non-artisan community member.

A woman from the artisan community group stated "Because of the long-standing social stigma and discrimination, we had been isolating ourselves from the mainstream society. We believe we are born to be inferior to other community members in our social status. The stigma and discrimination, and the long-standing exclusion, we have accepted it as having lower status or identity". Supporting this assertion, a 17-year-old child from the artisan community group mentioned "There has been a deep-rooted cultural value in our community, which is oriented to the view of the importance of the obligation to inherit the profession of our families and accept our low social status. This had been imparted in the minds of all children belonging to our community. We accepted it as our identity which has intergenerational impact".



### 3.2.2 Exclusion from social participation

Both key informants and focus group discussants reflected that people belonging to the artisan community were excluded from participating in social and political matters impacting their lives. Government officials from the Woreda Women and Social Affairs pointed out that when artisan community members were invited to participate in community level discussions, they did not want to partake in any of the meetings. Further, people from the artisan community groups were not willing to join community-based organizations such as *Iddirs*<sup>1</sup> and *Mahibers*. Moreover, a key informant from the Woreda administration stated *“When the Kebele and Woreda administrations call for a meeting to discuss on community matters such as security, local leadership, and community mobilization, men and women belonging to the artisan community groups were not interested to sit down with people from the non-artisan community members. Not anyone from the artisan community group was willing to assume local leadership”*.

A Kebele official echoed the intensity of exclusion of the artisan communities during the pre-intervention period as follows.

*The society used to exclude individuals and groups belonging to the artisan communities from full participation in the society. They were also deprived of social life. Thus, the social exclusion was limiting social relations and the denial of providing equal and living opportunities which led to the inability of individuals and groups to participate actively in the basic economic, social, and political functioning of our community. These main processes include discrimination, deprivation, isolation, shame, etc. Children from artisan community groups also experienced social exclusion by other children in the schools and community.*

### 3.2.3 No intermarriages with people from non-artisan community members

Participants from the child-centred social accountability groups and artisan community members indicated that people from artisan communities were not able to engage in marriage relationships with the non-artisan communities. People who established marriage relationship with someone from the artisan communities were considered as being cursed and would possess evil eyes. The children born to these families would also inherit the curse of their ancestors and families. One of the focus group participants (43-year-old member of the artisan community) stated how the deep-rooted negative attitude towards the artisan communities impacted peoples' relationships. He stated *“Few years ago, a man from non-artisan family fell in love with a young girl from artisan family and wanted to marry her. Due to the deep-rooted negative attitude towards the artisan community members, his parents and relatives criticized him for planning to marry a girl from the socially excluded family. Due to this, the planned marriage was cancelled”*.

### 3.2.4 Denied of access to land use rights, and social and economic services

Sadly enough, people who belong to the artisan communities do not have land to engage in farming practices. They have inherited this from their ancestors that their livelihood should entirely depend on artisan work. Such tradition and practice<sup>4</sup> has prevailed in the society. Such harmful practice continued over generations because of two factors. First, the artisan community members believe that this is the means of their livelihood that they are given by the creator God or Allah and never boldly demanded to secure land to engage in agricultural practices. Secondly, the local leaders sustained enforcing such harmful and discriminatory practice and hence never tried to help households from the artisan community to get equal opportunities to get access to land and help the community to engage in framing

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<sup>1</sup> *Iddir* are primarily funerary associations. They are a form of association setup by groups of individuals within communities on a voluntary basis, and a sub-type of local organizations which are prevalent form of social capital worldwide. Members are expected to make regular monetary payments which is primarily used for social contributions to members who face crisis such as loss of family members.



practices as an alternative or additional means of livelihood. One of the interviewed government officials in Kebena Woreda pointed out that for many years, people from the artisan communities did not have the interest to engage in farming activities. Even if they do not have land, they did not aspire to try other opportunities such as securing land on rental basis or sharing the products on equal basis with the owner of the land and engage in farming. Even if some have small plot of land around their homes, they were not interested to grow crops and vegetables in their backyards.

Focus group participants from the social accountability groups further stated that many of adults from artisan families are unable to fulfil necessities of their family members and send their children to school. Hence, they are employed in better off families with little or not pay (only get their daily food for work). Most importantly, many children from these families are employed in other families to serve in farming activities. These children do not have the opportunity to go to school.

### **3.2.5 Children from artisan families were deprived of their rights**

All focus group participants from the artisan and non-artisan communities openly mentioned that boys and girls from the artisan community groups had their rights grossly violated. The following were ways in which the rights of children have been violated in their communities.

- Most children from artisan communities had to migrate to other areas looking for better opportunities. These children are also employed in “well-to-do families” both in rural and urban settings and experience different forms of violence and abuse including child labour exploitation.
- Children were deprived of access to education and social participation. School aged children who belong to the artisan families were not encouraged to go to school. Instead, many children were helping their families in artisan work or employed as laborers to other families with little or no payment. Most importantly, children from the artisan communities had accepted the so called ‘low social identity’ and had limited opportunity to interact and play with other children in their neighbourhoods and communities. Even so there were some children who were enrolled in schools, these children had self-identified as belonging to a socially excluded community group. Children from the artisan communities were unable to join the different child-led structures such as school clubs and district level children’s parliaments. These structures are essential platforms for children to learn about their rights and exercise their participation rights. This assertion was supported by the community leader who stated *“Child labour exploitation was high among the children from the artisan families. As their families have low income, the children were employed in other households to support in tending cattle, farming activities, etc. These children have limited opportunity to go to school”*.
- Emotional abuse: children from the artisan families encounter verbal abuse, sarcastic remarks, degrading insults which result in social exclusion. It can be observed at every level in a society.

### **3.2.6 Factors and root causes for social exclusion of children and their families**

**Attitudinal barrier:** focus group participants mentioned that the prevailing negative attitude of the community towards artisan families including their children has been a major factor that contributed to social exclusion. One of the adult respondents who live in Kebena Woreda reported that people in the community have been hearing from our grandparents and ancestors that there was a time where people, especially blacks were sold as objects. Such attitude and practice have been transferred from one generation to another generation. The artisan communities considered themselves as slaves and transferred this attitude and practice to their children that led children from this community groups to isolate themselves from other children. One of the worst scenarios is that people (men and women, youth, and children) from the artisan communities are perceived as having possessed evil eyes by the society. Due to this, people from non-artisan communities did not want to socialize with the artisan community members including their children.

**Low level of awareness:** One of the main factors that contributed to social exclusion of the artisan community members is the low level of awareness and understanding on the human rights of people including children from the artisan community.

**Weak enforcement of legal frameworks** and institutional practices to address discriminatory practices against communities and children who face social exclusion.

### **3.3 How the social accountability helped the socially excluded communities and children?**

Communities including children participating in the child centered social accountability initiatives have undertaken different activities to support socially excluded communities and bring attitudinal changes. Some of the major activities undertaken are presented hereunder.

#### **3.3.1 Identified and analysed the issue of exclusion of the artisan communities**

Members of the child-centered social accountability groups including children, community members and local civil society organizations, religious and community leaders identified the children and their families that belong to artisan communities as being socially excluded and deprived of basic human rights. The children and their parents were facing various problems including depriving children from accessing education and other services, excluding from participation in play and recreational activities, and facing stigma and discrimination. Members of the social accountability groups reported that they organised different consultations with the Kebele, district and Zone government officials on the ways and extent of social exclusion and how it is impacting the education, protection and participation rights of children belonging to the artisan communities.

#### **3.3.2 Awareness raising education on the rights of children and their families**

Members of the social accountability groups including children, youth, adult community members, and civil society organizations identified the children and their families being socially excluded and deprived of basic human rights. Then, awareness raising education was conducted using available opportunities. These include facilitating community-based awareness raising campaigns and discussions, deliberating on the issue of social exclusion during the social accountability regular meetings, and conducting home-to-home visits to artisan families. Furthermore, the social accountability groups involved local government officials (Kebele officials, representatives for Woreda and Zone Women and Social Affairs and Administrations) during interface meetings which sensitized government officials on their duties and responsibilities to support children and their families from the artisan communities. The involvement of government officials helped the social accountability groups to ensure they have the support while promoting the human rights of the artisan community members.

A 36-year-old woman who participated in the focus group discussion stated how the social accountability program has brought about attitudinal changes in the society towards artisan community members. She described:

*"The issues that members of the social accountability groups raised is very sensitive. We need to bring changes in attitudes and practices towards the artisan families. We conducted home visits to artisan families and sensitized the artisan family members that their profession is not to be undermined. We sensitized them about their rights and that they should not undermine themselves, not socially isolate themselves from the mainstream community. We sensitized to many individuals and families that they are dignified human beings with rights and recognized members of the community".*

Another FGD participant (43-year-old man) and a member of the social accountability group stated the following.

*“The Kebele and Woreda officials organize community meetings to discuss about various community matters. In these meetings, representatives of the artisan communities are invited. The social accountability facilitators and government officials sensitized the participants about the deep-rooted tradition of excluding the artisan community members including their children and the impact of the exclusion on the lives of the whole family. They reminded members of the mainstream community to shift their discriminatory attitudes and the practices towards the artisan communities”.*

### **3.3.3 Involved members of the artisan families in the social accountability structures**

One of the strategies employed to ensure social inclusion of the artisan families and their children was involving representatives of the artisan communities in the social accountability groups and various dialogues. One of the social accountability facilitators in Kebena Woreda stated *“Involving representatives of the artisan community groups has given them with opportunities to speak out about their concerns. Above all, as they have experienced an intergenerational social exclusion, participating in the community-based dialogues was an eye opener for them as individual and as a community to be considered as dignified human beings entitled of rights. They have also got opportunity to communicate their concerns to the local government officials”.*

Another participant and a member of the social accountability group in Butajira town described how the social accountability initiatives created space for the community. She stated, *“The social accountability platform has given individuals from the artisan families a space to sit down with the mainstream community members to discuss about the various problems that the artisan families including their children encounter. It has given them opportunity to jointly work together to overcome the social barriers perpetuating social exclusion”.*

Supporting this assertion, one of the key informants from Kebena Woreda Women and Social Affairs stated that the social accountability program has increased awareness of the community on various kinds of social exclusion and the role of the community and government in fighting discrimination against the artisan community members. She described:

*In various community meetings such as interface meetings that involved artisan community members, we treat them positively. We did so because all of us believed that we need to be models by showing positive treatment to children and adults belonging to artisan communities. Members of the social accountability groups as well as local community leaders sensitized the artisan community members about their rights, that they should not undermine and isolate themselves from the mainstream community. We educated individuals and families that they are dignified human beings with rights and recognized members of the community. This has somewhat contributed to breaking the social barriers perpetuating social exclusion of this artisan community members”.*



Picture: children and their families participating in the social accountability meetings.

### 3.3.4 Advocacy for improving access to social services and economic opportunities

Adult focus group participants reported that members of the artisan communities face various socio-economic challenges. The social accountability groups and civil society partner have started advocating for the rights of artisan families including their children and prioritization of their needs in the government development initiatives and plans. Interviewed government officials from the Kebena Woreda administration and Women and Social Affairs stated that their offices encourage members of the artisan families to get organized in self-help groups to have better voice, access to credit services and even secure land. Even if they do not have land, some families were encouraged to secure land on rental basis and able to produce crops to feed their family members and generate additional income. People from artisan communities were also encouraged to participate in community-based organizations such as *Iddirs*, *Mahibers*, and other social groups to meet the psychosocial needs for both children and adults.

### 3.3.5 Support children from artisan families to have access to education

The other strategy employed by child centred social accountability groups to support children from the artisan families and enhance their social inclusion is improving access to education. They held consultations with Kebele administrators, district, and Zone government officials (Education and Women and Social Affairs) on the need to support the education of children from the artisan families. As a result, the Woreda and Zone Education offices were able to prioritize education of children from artisan community groups. Some of the major actions taken include:

- Schools and Kebele administrations conducted awareness raising programs and home-to-home visits to artisan families to send their children to school.
- Zone and district education offices took affirmative action such as provision of scholastic materials to encourage children from artisan families to get enrolled in school.
- School teachers started providing positive treatment to children from artisan families and conducted awareness raising in schools to reduce or stop discriminatory practices against these children by other school children.

Supporting this assertion, a primary school teacher who participated in the discussion in Kebena Woreda stated the following.

*"Children from the artisan families are given a name called 'fuga' which is very stigmatizing. Due to this, almost all children from artisan families were not enrolled in school. Following the initiatives taken by the child centered social accountability groups, there are promising trends in sending children from the artisan to school. To overcome the stigma and discrimination in school, we sensitize the school community to avoid using a derogatory name called 'fuga' or 'Yefuga lej', which means a child from fuga family or community. Although the discrimination against these group of children is not completely stopped, our effort to reduce the social barriers to inclusion has borne fruits. Many children from artisan families are attending school. This gives children from artisan communities to acquire knowledge on the importance of education, acquire skills to voice for their rights and other children who belong to their communities".*

## 3.4 Outcomes of the social accountability intervention

In this section, the results of the intervention in relation to the social inclusion of children and their families from artisan communities is presented.

### 3.4.1 Participation in community-based social groups and local meetings

After the social accountability intervention, it has been observed that people from the non-artisan (mainstream) community tended to shift their attitudes towards the artisan community members. They have started accepting artisan families to join community based social groups. Supporting this view, a 35-year-old female from artisan family and member of the social accountability group stated "We had

*experienced a generation of social exclusion and we were not treated as proper humans. Now, we see positive changes in the way the society treats us. Such positive change should sustain and resonate to other communities. Now, we are joining 'Iddirs' and Shengos with non-artisan community members. Some of the people from artisan community groups become leaders of these community-based structures".* Furthermore, one of the social accountability facilitators added that members of the artisan community groups have started participating in wedding ceremonies with the non-artisan community members. For artisan community members, participating in *Iddirs*, wedding ceremonies, and religious festivals is a way of social inclusion and a social healing mechanism.

Moreover, a Kebele official in Zebimolla Kebele administration in Kebena Woreda, pointed out that after the awareness raising efforts, members of the artisan community are invited to participate in local community-based meetings that is organized by the Kebele and Woreda administration. This gives them the opportunity to shift their self-concept that they are being valued by the society and are valuable member of the community who have a stake to improve their communities. A key informant from the Kebena Woreda Women and Social Affairs stated that the Zone, Woreda and Kebele government officials are trying to help artisan communities to get organized in self-help groups to improve their confidence and their income.

### **3.4.2 Social inclusion through intermarriages**

One of the positive changes that has started happening in the intervention communities is that the artisan families are being integrated through intermarriages with non-artisan community members. Focus group participants explicitly mentioned that unlike the pre-intervention times, this time there is a positive change in social integration of artisan families through intermarriages with non-artisan communities. Supporting this assertion, a focus group discussion participant from social accountability group stated *"This time, there are people from artisan families who are intermarried with families with non-artisan families from Kebena, Tigris and Amhara ethnic groups who live in their community. Children born to these families can live without being discriminated"*. Participants further stated that such a practice is a big attitudinal and behavioral changes observed in the community and this has hugely contributed to social cohesion and social inclusion of families including children from artisan community groups. Furthermore, it was stated that people from non-artisan communities have started making products such as pottery, blacksmith, and wooden items to generate income and sustain their livelihoods. This means the community is shifting its attitudes towards people from artisan communities. People have realized that artisan work is a profession to sustain their livelihoods rather than a job that makes them feel inferior to others.

### **3.4.3 Increased enrolment of children from artisan families in primary schools**

Participants of the different focus groups (children, people from artisan community groups and social accountability groups) affirmed that one of the significant results observed in the intervention communities is increased school enrolment of children from artisan community groups.

Data obtained from Guraghe Zone Education Department show that in the past five years, school enrolment of children from artisan families has increased from 0 in 2016 to over 320 children 2022/23 in four primary schools (Wema, Lalimo, Zebimolla, and Fikado) since the social accountability program started in Zebimolla Kebele in Kebena Woreda. Furthermore, data obtained from Kebena Woreda Education Office showed that 37 children (25 boys and 12 girls) were attending their primary education in Zebimolla primary school. Social accountability groups and Zone and Woreda Education and Women and Social Affairs Offices have been undertaking awareness raising programs, facilitating the return of children from artisan families who left their families looking for better opportunities. The Zone and



Woreda Education Offices have provided scholastic materials to children from artisan communities to encourage them to go to school.



Picture: children from artisan and non-artisan communities learning together

#### 3.4.4 Opportunities to socialize with other children

Attending schools is not only giving children from artisan communities an opportunity to acquire knowledge and essential life skills, but it also helps them to socialize with other children and overcome stigma and discrimination from peers and adults from the non-artisan community groups. In addition to Woreda Education and Women and Social Affairs, teachers have been undertaking efforts to prevent discrimination against children from artisan families. In support of this, Women and Child Expert from Kebena Woreda stated *"In most schools, using degrading names such as 'fuga' to children from artisan families is discouraged. Due to this, children from artisan families have developed a feeling of social inclusion"*. Furthermore, a schoolteacher added *"As a school community, we have discussed and agreed with teachers and students to avoid calling children of 'fuga' families in school and community settings. Before intervention, people used to call children from 'fuga' families, and they felt stigmatized"*. Teachers also added that although there is still a long way to go to bring sustained behavioral change in the society, there are changes in attitudes of the society towards children and their families from the artisan community groups. This time, children from artisan and non-artisan families play together in school and the community, and this has helped children from artisan families have a feeling being socially included. One of the children from artisan families described *"Being in school gives me a lot of opportunities. It gave me opportunities to play with other children and share my feelings with others. Although there is still unchanged thinking, there are some positive changes in the way children are treated"*.



Picture: kinds from artisan and non-artisan families playing together in school setting

Furthermore, a community facilitator described how the social accountability intervention contributed to reducing stigma and discrimination against children and their families. He described *“The social accountability with children has contributed to shifting attitudes of the people towards children and adults from artisan families. Community members are almost avoiding using socially demeaning words such as “Fuga” in their day-to-day interactions and communications”*. It appears that the social accountability initiatives are using schools as a micro-system context to reduce the social barriers for inclusion of children from socially excluded community groups.

### 3.5. Lessons learnt

- The child centered social accountability programming has fostered attitudinal and practice changes in treating children and adults from the artisan families.
- While the social accountability with children was implemented to address children’s rights issues, it has also contributed to addressing the deep-rooted social exclusion that resulted in deprivations—economic, educational, cultural, and social, of children and their families from artisan community groups. It helped to reducing barriers to social inclusion of families belonging to artisan families by empowering the community to identify their problems, facilitating constructive social dialogue, and creating space to participation in community-based initiatives.
- Duty bearers especially the Zonal and District Administrations, Women and Social Affairs, and Education Offices either did not realize that children from the artisan communities were not deprived of access to education or they were not concerned about children’s lack of access to social services. The social accountability with children intervention has stirred government officials to recognize the problems of children and their families and take initiatives to improve access to education and other social services.



## 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are given based on the suggestions from children, community members and government officials. These recommendations require multi-sectoral interventions in programming and advocacy to improve the lives of children and their families from the artisan communities.

- Design and implement integrated interventions to address the socio-economic, education, health, and protection rights of children and their families from artisan communities. To ensure their economic empowerment, there is a need to organize women and men from artisan families in self-help groups, facilitate access to skill enhancement trainings, credit, and market opportunities to sell their products with reasonable prices. Additionally, efforts should be made to increase access to health services, education for children, and protection from violence and exploitation.
- Most families from the artisan communities are economically poor and socially disadvantaged. Save the Children and Civil Society actors should advocate that these families to be encompassed in social protection programs. This should enable parents to feed their children and send them to school.
- Support the participation of children from artisan communities in school clubs and Woreda and Zone children's parliament structures. This will give them with opportunities to participate in various civic engagement activities that would help them gain knowledge, skills, develop confidence and optimism.
- Train children from the artisan communities on soft skills such as communication, assertiveness, social competence, and self-regulation skills. This would help them overcome negative thinking and feelings that lead them to develop feeling of inferiority and social incompetence.
- Teachers should take additional efforts to ensure positive treatment of children from artisan families in school setting. Some of the activities could include conducting awareness raising program in schools to reducing or stopping discriminatory practices against children from artisan families and enforcing school rules and regulations.
- Deconstruct the social identity that members of the artisan communities have inherited from their ancestors. This requires massive social transformation both in the artisan and mainstream communities. Civil society organizations and zone and district government offices shall implement social and behavioural change activities targeting the whole community using socio-ecological model. This will create a supportive environment for the children and their families to develop psychosocial resilience and actively participate transforming their families and communities.