



From leaving home TO SETTING UP SHOP

Hana stands at the front of the small shop she owns, in Aradom village, in Amhara region northern Ethiopia, where she grew up. She is wearing a beautiful dress and her hair is styled. Although she is close to home, Hana is far from where she thought she would be in life. After leaving school for financial reasons, she thought her only option would be to leave Ethiopia and migrate to find work.

According to the International Labor Organization, in 2016, there was 150 million migrant workers in the world – 66.6 million of them were women¹. In Ethiopia, poverty, unemployment and family pressure to earn money, combined with low public awareness about the consequences of migration have created a culture of migration, especially among young people in the rural areas. In many cases, youth accept irregular migration routes and jobs, which are risky, harmful and exploitative, especially for girls. In Ethiopia, youth migration has been significantly increasing, with an estimated 20,000-25,000 young people irregularly migrating from Ethiopia annually.

Hana was almost finished with her high school education when her family's financial situation drastically changed. Her father passed away, leaving her mother as the only provider. Hana's family could only afford to send one child to school and they made the difficult choice to have Hana leave her studies early while her brother continued. As Hana relates, in Ethiopia, *"girls are only expected to get married or find ways to take care of the family. It's a bitter feeling but I had no choice"*.

Hana had heard that many young girls from her village had migrated and found jobs living elsewhere. She started to look for more information and heard girls who had migrated to the Middle East were sending money back to their families. Hana decided she would have to leave her home and head to the Middle East to earn an income.

"After my father passed away, this was the only option for me to make ends meet," Hana said.

While she was waiting to receive her passport, Hana heard community leaders talking about the Youth in Action program (YiA). The leaders were registering unemployed young people between the ages of 14 to 18 in her village.

YiA is a six-year youth livelihood program implemented by Save the Children in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. The program aims to improve the socio-economic status of 40,000 out-of-school girls and boys, in rural Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda.

In Ethiopia, YiA was launched in October 2012, with the aim to reach 8,700 young people aged 14 to 18, living in the rural communities of four woredas of the Amhara region: Gidan, Gubalafto, Habru and Raya Kobo.

During the transitional period to adulthood, YiA invests in building and enhancing rural girls and boys foundational and life skills, social assets and knowledge. The program facilitates their livelihood opportunities, and builds key partnerships to address barriers to young people's participation in their economies and communities, such as access to local market and gender-based barriers.

¹ http://www.ilo.org/addisababa/information-resources/publications/WCMS_569654/lang--en/index.htm

Hana goes through an inspiring journey towards a better future

After hearing about the program, Hana decided to apply and she was selected in 2015.

During the five months of learning classes, Hana and her peers strengthened their foundational and technical skills before they started their own business. Using Save the Children's youth centred curriculum, youth learn about themselves, their families and the resources in their communities. They improve their communications, negotiation and problem-solving skills, in addition to technical and financial skills like how to do budgeting, saving and business plans. The YiA facilitators and mentors take the participants to the local market to do assessments led by youth themselves and to hear from market experts about the market needs and opportunities.



In the learning classes, Hana *“was inspired by the way we were taught the new skills which directly spoke to my needs”*.

After finishing the learning phase, Hana decided to open her own shop in her house. With a grant from YiA, she bought the first products to sell, with an interesting twist. Hana is the first in her community to sell hygiene items, mainly for girls and women. *“I am a girl and I know how these things are needed. I learnt how to be innovative in my business,”* Hana added.

One of the program's research studies has shown that increased financial knowledge for the youth has translated into improved attitudes about savings and budgeting not only for them, but also for their immediate family members. *“Those who graduated from the program have now more structured plans for how to save and spend their money, doing more price comparisons while shopping, and keeping records of earnings. We also noted that female participants were clearer about the financial knowledge they had gained and demonstrated more confidence in how they could use this knowledge in their daily lives”*, explained Angaw Nurign, YiA Program Manager in Ethiopia.

Family and community members are the gatekeepers for youth livelihood development

Hana's mother is relieved that her daughter has a new lease on life and did not have to migrate. She helped Hana pay to build the roof of the shop and provided her with the space in the yard of their house to set up the shop.

“When she told me about her plan to migrate, I’ve got a bad feeling. I worried so much of the unknown that was going to wait for her there. When she was accepted in YiA, this was a big relief for me because I saw the people who are running the program. They are from us, we know them and we trust them,” her mother said.

Hana had a mentor as well from the community who trained her on how to procure her inventory and deal with wholesalers. She was able to do a market assessment to determine what items she should sell in her shop and how to get the highest quality items for the best price. *“It was an eye opening experience for me.”*

People from Hana’s village also supported her by buying from her shop instead of bigger shops. *“Hana is setting an example for all girls in the village. I hope all the other girls in our community will get a similar opportunity so that they don’t have to migrate for work”,* says Qessesse Kassie, a local community representative. *“This program has made us look at girls differently”.* He added.



YiA encourages families and community members to provide support to their youth, which enhances YiA participants’ abilities to establish and maintain successful and sustainable economic activities.

Bigger plans for an even a brighter future

Hana is now making an income and putting money towards her savings. She wants to expand her business to become a wholesaler. *“I am going to be the first female wholesaler in my community.”*

Hana has even made enough money to spend on herself as a reward: *“From my profit, sometimes I reward myself for the hard work I have done so far and buy myself a nice dress or style my hair. I love it.”*

“Before YiA, I was feeling that I am missing an important part in my life which is education. I hated the fact that I started to forget how to read and write but YiA made it up for me. I got my education back but in a useful way that will benefit me forever”