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Abstract

The development ecology of Children and youths are not favorable in many parts of urban areas of Ethiopia. There are risk situations in schools, in the community and family environments. Among others, family disintegration for various reasons, in effective schools, as well as poor other social services, and expansion of illegal drugs and movies have made the lives of large number of children and youths vulnerable. Moreover, physical, sexual and labor abuses of children are prevalent in different settings and situations. However, despite the presence of such risk factors against the positive child and youth developments, there are stories of success achieved by children and youths who were once vulnerable and exposed to various types of adversities. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore developmental challenges and risks to children and youths in the town and protective factors and developmental assets that helped some children to overcome early life difficulties and become successful in their later life. Data from life histories of 30 successful children and young adults, interviews and group desiccations with the concerned bodies indicated that proper socialization, attachment to positive peers and role models, martial, financial and moral supports at appropriate times as well as children’ internal qualities could nurture resilience capabilities in children and youths who are growing in adverse situations. It could also facilitate attaining life goals.

Keywords:
child resilience, child abuse, developmental assets, protective factors, risks to child and youth development, achievements in life, success stories

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1. Introduction

It has been widely recognized that poverty, loss of family, divorce, lack of access to basic services such as education, family problems such as conflicts and substance abuse are the major risk factors that intensify or aggravate child abuses and exploitations mainly in urban areas of Ethiopia (Kebrom, 2008; Nardos, 2007; Getenet, 2007; MoLSA, 2002). This in turn threatens children’s emotional, moral, cognitive and intellectual or social developments which play a very important role in their adult life (Kebrom, 2008). Abuse, neglect and violence against children exact extraordinary costs to society and linked to lifelong social and health problems: post traumatic stress disorder, depression, antisocial and aggressive behavior, substance abuse, physical damage, impaired academic and work performance, problematic peer relations, and greater involvement with criminal activities (Lomi, 2002; Hairu, 2006).

According to the 2003 National Policy Document of the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, the Ethiopian Youth (age 15-29) are facing many problems and challenges. The major ones include: unemployment (67%), shortage of vocational and technical schools as well as recreational centers for talent development, and weakness of child related institutions for positive experiences of moral and life skill development. Consequently, many youngsters in urban areas are forced to involve in anti-social activities such as substance abuse (chat, shisha, and alcoholism), commercial sex work, begging, street life and criminal activities.

Arba Minch town is one of urban areas characterized by high rate of substance abuse, streetism, rural-urban migration of children, deep poverty, unemployment, idleness, child abuse, orphanism, crime and violence, and a feeling of insecurity (GTZ-Is, 2003). For instance, the unemployment rate of the town is 14% , and 62% of the total population is migrant (ROSA, 2007). Education and health coverage of the town are 60% and 41% respectively (CSA, 2005; ROSA, 2007; Hairu, 2006). From the above reports it is apparent that growing up in Arba Minch involves risks to positive child and youth development.
It is equally important to note the fact that the town hosts a number of self-reliant, industrious and successful children and youth who were once in risk situations in the past. In this regard, some of former shoe shiners, abused waiters, migrant street boys, urban gangs and children from destitute families have became self-reliant and socially competent. Some of them become investors with a capital of more than 500,000 Birr. This is because of their internal strengths and external supports and encouragements from family members, positive role model individuals and peers as well as government, welfare organizations, religious and educational institutions. The purpose of this research is to explore the common risk factors that threaten healthy development of children and youths, the protective factors and developmental assets that facilitate their successful adaptations and transformation despite the presence of adversities. Primary data for the study was collected mainly through in-depth life history interview, observations and focus group discussions. A total 55 key informants were interviewed in detail. Life history method was employed to generate data from 30 successful children and youths, age between 13 and 29 years. Three focus group discussions were held with 8 successful children, 11 teachers, and 9 parents.

2. Common Risks to Children and Youth in Arba Minch Town

The common risk factors to children and youth development in Arba Minch town can be categorized under the three of child’s development ecology: in the community, school and family.

Risk factors in the community include high rate of substance abuse, crime and violence, unemployment /idleness and absence of children and youth recreational centers. The prevalent drugs or substances that are threatening children’s and youngster’s physical, social, intellectual and economic developments include cha’t, Shisha (a stimulant drug to be smoked), cigarette and alcoholic drinks. In Arba Minch town, there are totally 103 chat shops. An estimated some 5444 Aqááras (bundles) or about 1815 kgs of chat arrive daily from Gidole, the nearby town. It is widely reported that shisha and chat have many health

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Chat is stimulant drug plant, its leaf is chewed mainly by young peoples in Ethiopia
problems for the consumers and pushing some unemployed youth for crime mainly theft and robbery cases to satisfy their addiction needs. High prevalence of substance abuse is producing wrong role model individuals for descent children in the community. This is because children usually consider their elders’ activities- both in the family and in the community as an “acceptable practice”. Chewing chat for a long time is killing children’s & youngsters’ productive time and their industrious sprits.

On the other hand there is high rate of crime and youth delinquency. According to the town’s first instance court report of 2008, for the consecutive three years (2005-2007), 3547 offenders were accused and out of which the majority (2795) offenders (more than 70%) were children & youngsters under age category between 15 and 29 years. High rate of unemployment, high consumption rate of substances such as chat, shisha, alcohols and the consequent addictions are considered as major factors for their involvement in criminal activities. In addition, the expansion of illegal video centers where children and youth frequently watch violent movies and pornographies are also easily inducing youngsters for violence and involvement in early sexual activities.

Moreover, failure in school and children’s less educational attainments are other factors that limit the youth capacity to reason out and compete in labor markets and hence get involved in criminal activities. Negative peer pressure was also reported as another cause of the prevalence of youth delinquencies. Street children and other disadvantaged groups were further abused by urban gangs who use them for theft and robbery cases as information provider. In this regard according to Arba Minch Town First Instance Court Report of the year 2007, 22 cases of child abuses (rape, physical injury and sexual harassment) by urban gangs were brought to the court. Thus those delinquent youths are becoming negative role model for descent children through teaching children crimes and violence.

On the other hands hundreds of children and youngsters are idle and the unemployment rate is 14% in the town. The majority of unemployed groups were the youth - age between 15 & 29 years (GTZ—Is 2003, ROSA, 2007). Within these risks the town also has no children & youth recreational and sports center for spending their spare times and gaining mental and physical development. The town also lacks
technical and vocational schools for talented and interested students in vocations to enhance work and employment creativity.

Risks in and around schools are also threatening child and youth development. Large Class size, lack of laboratory, well furnished and having large collection library, shortage of text books as well as ineffectiveness and in some cases absence of clubs for talent developments and others have make the school environment uncomfortable for teaching learning process. The ineffectiveness of government schools also weakening youngsters social competence, critical consciousness, positive self regard as well as problem solving skills as they are not providing the quality education that could enhance resilience capabilities. In this case Benard (1995) argues that to promote resilience among students, curriculum should be thematic and challenging, instructions should focus on board range of learning styles based on student’s interests and capacities as well as create opportunities for critical inquiry, problem solving and dialogue. Finally good academic records, attentive and caring role model teachers are necessary. Effective clubs are also useful to create opportunities for participation so as to identify special talents and gifts as well as gain moral and life skill experiences.

For many children in the town the family environment is also not safe and comfortable. Among others, child abuse, child neglect, poverty and family disorganization are the most prevalent risks in the family. There are emotional, sexual and physical abuses: Bettering, burning, abandonment, inattention to healthcares, deprivation of basic needs such as education, food and closing. The physical and emotional abuses of orphans were committed by children’s relatives and guardians. Unfavorable conditions in the family that is child abuse together with poverty and family disorganization forced many children to leave homes for streets in the town. There are more than 500 off the street children in town. Those children are further exposed for abuses and neglects on the streets. There is also high rate of child abandonment of age under one year. According to Gamo Goffa Zone Social and Labor Affairs Office report of the year 2008, 95 children were abandoned within two years (2006-2007). Child abuses and abandonments in the family are mainly caused by high rate of poverty and family disorganization resulted from divorce, family conflicts, death of biological parents. In this case
according to the town’s Women Affairs office report of 2008 within the first 5 months, 146 severe parental conflict cases were brought to the office and out of which 7 families were divorced. Hence hundreds of children are in stressful situations because of the above parental discord. In addition, there are more than 2300 orphan vulnerable children and many of them lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS.

3. Major Challenges and Tragedies the Resilient children and young Adults Encountered

As this study is mainly based on the success stories of 30 children and young adults, their early life time difficulties are need to be explored. They have encountered various types of life time challenges and risks: Some of them were victims of abuses and exploitations but later recovered. Others were vulnerable but never abused or exploited and the rest were perpetrators of anti-social activities until they recover and become the meaningful member of their family and the community.

The type and intensities of abuses and neglect vary depending on type of work they were engaged in, the living environment, sex and age categories and socio-economic backgrounds of their families. Thus, it was mainly some of migrants, street children, orphans and children with destitute families suffered a lot. They encountered labor exploitations and physical abuses by employers, guardians, step parents and their own families. But later they recovered due to internal strengths and external supports that are discussed in next sections.

More than half of the 30 successful children and youngsters’ family poverty and destitution deprived them enough food, clothing in their early life and forced them to dropout schools in different times. In some cases they were ashamed, humiliated and lost their dignity and respect among their frinds in the community due to their destitute life. Hence, some of them left homes for streets or migrated to Arba Minch town from their home villages in rural areas. 12 of the 30 successful informants encountered risks and life challenges due to family disorganization resulted from lose of biological parents, divorce or chronic family conflicts. Thus, they were forced to migrate or face stressful situation due to lack of basic needs and abuses by guardians or step parents. However, they have never been involved in anti-social
activities such as substance abuses or criminal acts. Rather they were involved in self-help activities and gradually became self-reliant through their own efforts and supports from positive friends, kin groups and etc.

Six of successful informants involved in various kinds of antisocial activities: substance abuse or addictions (alcoholism, chewing chat and smoking cigarette), practicing gambling, involving in criminal activities such as theft and robbery and group fights. It was due to negative peer pressures, family negligence to follow up and support their academic progress. Hence, those children and youths were fired from schools or failed in national higher education entrance exams. Moreover, until they had recovered from their addictions and stopped their involvement in violence and criminal activities or excessive substance abuse through positive peer attachments and support from extended family, these groups lost respect, trust and dignity among their descent friends and families as well as in the community.

Therefore, the 30 successful children and young adults faced various types of adversities. One risk factor led them to another risks and challenges. But they escaped and managed life time tragedies and difficulties with their internal qualities and appropriate external supports. Hence the next section deals with these protective factors and developmental assets.

4. Protective Factors and Developmental Assets

This section explores the protective factors and developmental assets that helped some children and young adults avoid child abuse/exploitations or recover from abusive/exploitative situations and antisocial activities. These include consistent family advice, encouragement and follow ups; taking responsibility early; supports and encouragements from others; and individual strengths and qualities.
Family advice, Encouragement and Follow up

Those who enjoyed consistent family advice, follow-ups and encouragements with love and affection from infancy to adolescence developed good values in life: achievement motivations, high self-esteem and industrious spirits. One or two of their family members offered informants about life alternatives, good ethics, moral and religious values and norms in every actions and interactions. Their family members put pressure on them through warning and guidance not to violate values and norms. It was together with love and affection but not through insulting, quarrel or nagging or violence.

Case 1 Paris Jamal. Paris Jamal narrates the ways of his father’s positive socialization as follows:

I love my intelligent father. He was poor. But he loves me and advices me always good things. He told and in fact convinced me that it is bad and immoral to be addicted with alcohol or any drug in Islam. If I violate Islamic laws, I will fail in life. He warned me. He also told me that if I am honest, neat, pray and work hard (as usually we did in our family) Allah would increase my success. Since I respect, trust, and like my father’s advice, I accepted his paternal warnings and advice. Until today I have no addiction of any kind. Before I moved to Arba Minch town searching for better life and job opportunity he also told me that every employer needs trustful and dependable workers. To check this they may leave money here and there. If you see that, do not touch it, said my father… when I was employed in Soma Restaurant as a waiter, in Arba Minch, the owner tested my loyalty leaving money here and there. However, by the help of my father’s advice I have not only passed the critical test but also I was appointed as a dependable cashier and controller of other waiters in the restaurant. I worked for eight years in the restaurant until I saved sufficient money, that I was collecting from tourists who were using the restaurant, to start my own business…

Arguing in a similar vein West and Farrington (1973) and Bernard (1991) stated that consistent family guidance and care could facilitate positive child development. They agree that family could nurture resilience through consistency and quality of care and support provided during infancy, childhood, and adolescence. Accordingly, adequate and consistent parental role models and harmony between the parents, parents who spend time with children in order to pass verbal or
social attainments could increase children’s self-esteem. Parents who provide firm and consistent guidance without repressive or rejecting attitudes and parents who provide for and take an interest in constructive use of leisure could also promote and provide resilience in children. These in turn not only help them to recover from impacts of risk exposures but also facilitate their socioeconomic and moral developments.

**Taking Responsibility in the family early**

More than half of the successful informants took fair responsibilities in their family early. They involved in solving families’ economic problems through independently running small business activities or got part time jobs in organizations (hotels, cafeterias etc.). Through the way they learned business and problem solving skills. This is because when they realized that they were helping their family they tested themselves that they are useful and valuable. As they were busy starting from childhood, they had no time for substance addictions or to resort to illegal video centers due to the prevalent negative peer pressures in the town.

**Case 2. Wondemagegn Gebretsadique**

As I was the eldest son in my family, I started to help my poor mother financially when I was kid. I worked as street vendor- selling sugar cane, renting bicycle and working as messengers to augment my mother’s little income gained from selling local drinks. When I helped my mother I felt happy. She guided and encouraged me how to behave and communicate with people. She also controlled me not to be addicted with chat as some of my friends, fairly. Until grade eight I was working as assistant carpenter and later as assistant welder in private wood and metal work shops. It was there I began to appreciate wood works. When I saw beautiful, newly produced house furniture, I was surprised that how man made that. At that time my deepest interest in woodworks and constructions engraved in my heart. I grew up, from childhood to adolescence, while I was helping myself and my family financially. Usually I asked myself when and how I can live a better life. I knew I had no one to depend. Then I began to take full responsibility to lead my life to a better direction. During my childhood work, I learned many things: skills in constructions, woodworks and social communications.
Since I was busy I had no time to chew chat or take other drugs. There I also set my goals in my heart to have my own workshop. This was the foundation for my all of entrepreneurial efforts and development…Now I have a car, Cafeteria…everything you can see.

In this way the above informants and others who took fair responsibilities in their family early learned social and effective communications skills during their income generating endeavors starting from childhood. They also realized early that the only option to escape poverty is working hard exploring the existing opportunities. Their involvement in income generating activities early provided them an opportunity for practical trainings of entrepreneurial skills such as profit making and in some cases construction skills. It also created an opportunity them to appreciate critically structures, resources and options as well as risks around them. Hence, it enhanced problem solving skills inside them.

Supports and encouragements from others

− Peer Influence and Role Models

Positive peers in early life have played pivotal role in many of the successful informant’s endeavors for development and overcoming adversities. Their positive and productive friends not only served them as positive role models but also provided them the necessary ideas and information about life skills and alternatives.

Industrious, descent and productive friends encouraged them for productive and wise use of time including their leisure. These types of peers usually brought the above informants to churches for moral educations and to their own business centers. They showed and taught them practical ways of profit making and income creations. Moreover, the successful ones always talk about further success: education attainments or profit maximization. This in turn encouraged children and young adults to search their talents for their development. It also enhanced their industrious sprits and achievement motivations. Some of the above informants also enjoyed material, technical, and financial supports from their friends at a critical moment of their life such as after school failure, and starting small business activities. They showed and encouraged them to exploit resources around. Many of them recovered
from stressful situations such as family disorganizations by consulting their worries and challenges to their closest friends. Their positive friends helped them in getting jobs and adopting new environments. In this case migrant street boys learned urban way of life from their productive friends who came from same locality before. Thus, together with other protective factors, attachment to positive and productive peers not only distanced the above informants from antisocial activities but also helped them to recover from addictions and created an opportunity to gain practical life skill experiences as well as financial and material resources.

In addition, many of the successful children and young adults appreciated and were motivated to follow positive role model individuals in the community during childhood and adolescence. Their goal orientations and motivations to achieve these goals were increased and reinforced when they were attached and began to appreciate individuals in their schools, in the family, in the neighborhoods and in their work places for their socio-economic achievements or unique talents. Sometimes they appreciated institutions such as hotels, buildings and technological products to own it or produce it at some point in their life.

Role model individuals and institutions provided direct and indirect lessons of entrepreneur’s skills for the successful informants. They learned from positive role model individuals values of good ethics and hard working due to closest intimacy with them or employment in the successful individuals’ organizations. Therefore, role model individuals encouraged those children and youngsters to work hard and search their talents as well as find opportunities and resources around them. In this regard Winfield (1994) argues that resilient children have enjoyed the presence of at least one significant adult in their life. These role models in family, work places and etc have taught informants desired and acceptable behaviors, creativity, problem solving skills and entrepreneurship skills.

- **Kin Groups, Government and NGOs support and Encouragement**

More than have of the 30 successful informants enjoyed information, technical, material and financial supports and verbal encouragements from kin groups, government organizations and NGOs at critical moments in their early life. This critical moments in their life
include lose of one or two of biological parents, failure of school leaving national exams or in primary schools or starting small trade to make a living. Some NGOs such as Mecane Yesus church, Irish AID and others in collaboration with the town administration provided orphans and destitute various kinds of life skill trimmings, peer educations and part-time jobs as waiters and shoe shiners by providing financial and technical assistance when they were in primacy schools. This assistance heightened their self-esteem and achievement motivations as they felt that they were not totally helpless or powerless or have some control over challenges and risks around them. Financial supports and encouragements from extended families helped some groups to expand their small trade or enterprise and finally became successful. The following case aptly illustrates the importance of kin support to reduce risk impacts in child’s life and the consequent success in business or education.

Case 3. Kastro Kasa, who was a migrant street boy, reported the external support he enjoyed as the following:

*I came to Arba Minch town from Welayta following my uncle when I was denied education opportunity by my poor families in the rural wolyata and I was 16 years old at the time. On the streets of Arba Minch, I suffered a lot, to the extent of traveling on bare foot to schools. I was street vendor and shoeshine. I also later failed in ESLCE*. But I never gave up, I continued being street vendor and shoe shine. In the meantime my uncle gave me a photo camera and showed me the technique when he saw my determination… I became mobile photographer. I realized that photograph service is the best business in the town. Again my uncle provided me small plot of urban land near his home. There, with my saved money, I opened a small shop and mini photo studio. Since the place was near the main street I enjoyed great demand for my shop and photo services. My uncle usually advised and encouraged me to save money and not to be addicted with substances such as chat. Gradually I expanded my business; I worked hard … now I am successful… I have more than 300,000 Birr capital…

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3 ESLCE Refers to Ethiopian School Leaving National Examination. This exam is a guarantee for Ethiopian youths to join university and consequently to become competent in the labor market.
On the other hand, some informants obtained technical, material and financial support from the government. In fact, before the government support they had already started small business activities such as woodworks and metalwork or small trade after their failure in school leaving national examinations or migration to the town. Some of them were also diploma graduates in Wood Works and Auto Mechanics from Arbaminch Mecane Yesus Vocational School when they were in high schools. After they had failed in the school leaving national exams they started producing house and office furniture privately. However, though they had the skill and determination to work hard, they had no scientific business planning skills as well as the capital to expand their enterprises. Hence, it was during this moment that the Town Administration Office in Collaboration with Micro and Small Enterprise Development Office provided loans and trainings of business planning. The office also provided them with urban lands, and kebele house for their workshop and to sell their products. As a result they were able to expand their enterprise. Hence, the government’s support reinforced their achievement motivations.

The following case shows the importance of government’s support in child and young adults’ resilience to adversities as well as their socioeconomic achievements.

Case 4. Belay Mekonnen. Belay, who grew up in absolute poverty and who later became a well known young investor in Arba Minch town, reported the government’s support in the critical moments of his early life as follows:

We (Belay, Honey and Kefyalew) were the first youth to be organized in a group to run an enterprise together in the town. We started producing house and office furniture individually when we failed in ESLCE and couldn’t get any job in government or private sectors. We came together with our individual experiences of one year and customers after contributing 500 Birr each. Three of us were diploma graduates in Auto Mechanics and Woodworks from Arbaminch Mechane Yesus Vocational School when we were in high schools. We became productive and our products house and office furniture were of high quality and we enjoyed high demand. This was because each of us had different skills and we worked in a very cooperative and friendly way as we were best friends. But at the beginning we had no enough capital and business skills to further expand our enterprise. At this
moment after realizing our determination, persistence and strength, the government supported us. The Town Administration and Youth Office provided us urban house and land for our workshop and to sell our products. The office also facilitated to gain loans from Omo Micro Finance Institution. It also helped us by finding markets mainly through helping us to win bids or auction in government organizations. We also obtained business planning trainings. Thus, we became known in the town and expanded our enterprise. This was the turning point in my life. Later on when I had enough capital I got investment license and began to run the enterprise individually...Thanks to God Now you can see I am becoming the known investor in the town having more than 2 million Birr capital...

One can see from the above narrations and explanations that the government's financial, material and technical supports in the decisive moments of their early life enhanced their business endeavors. This was because they enjoyed capitals and skills to expand their business and enjoyed markets for their products. In addition, since they have internal strengths and some of them have skills in wood and metal works obtained through formal trainings in the above vocational school they have effectively used the government supports and encouragements.

Therefore, additional supports and encouragements from a positive peer, relatives, government and NGOs in early life served the above informants as one of the major protective factor and developmental assets. Information, material, technical and financial supports in vital moments in their life from childhood to adolescence heightened their self esteem as well as achievement motivations. This is because they felt that they had some control over challenges and risks around them and they were not helpless. Thus, because of the above supports and encouragements some of them became successful in their education. Others successfully expanded their business activities and enterprises. And still the rest recovered from substance addictions and traumas resulted from family disorganization or disintegration.

The above discussion is also supported by resilience scholars’ such as Grotberg (1995) and Winfield (1994) arguments that resilience can be fostered and positive developments could be sustained by reducing negative chain reactions following risk exposure. These scholars further noted that children and youth who are exposed to the impacts of
risks such as school failure, unemployment, poverty, substance addiction and family disorganization could recover and succeed in their developmental efforts when they are provided with appropriate supports. These types of support include skill trainings, part time jobs, technical or material supports and information about options, resources, and strategies to manage life and minimize the surrounding risks. As we have seen above these kinds of support and encouragements can be obtained from positive and productive peers and role model individuals, kin groups, NGOs, and government organizations that are concerned with positive youth and child developments.

Individual strengths and qualities of the successful children and youths

- Problem solving and social skills

Many of the successful children and youngsters are aware of their own power, limitation, opportunities and risks round them. Accordingly they have appropriately exploited their own potentials and the surrounding resources. They realized early in their life that they had no one to depend and hence worked hard to have a better destiny in the future. Their resourceful and critical planning helped them to obtain appropriate life skills and social capital since those informants minds are open for positive things they easily learned from other’s success and failure stories. It is further strengthened by their conscious and appropriate exploitation of modern information sources such as the media, success stories in nobles and books as well as effectively used leisure times.

The informants’ good personalities offered them social capital. They enjoyed loyalty and acceptance from employers and colleagues. Their high emphasis to healthy cultural and religious values in the society further motivated them for hardworking, capital accumulation and hence success in educational and business endeavors. Thus, they maximized their self-reliance by creating an opportunity within an opportunity.

- Having positive values

The successful children and young adults have equipped themselves with positive values from chilled hood to their present status.
They are goal oriented, achievement motivated, persistence and determined to achieve their goals, positively interacted with others and optimist. They convinced themselves failure and success as normal phenomena in human life. These qualities inside them served as a driving force or effectively use the existing opportunities and resources. These assisted them to overcome challenges in early life and later on succeeded in achieving social and economic capital accumulation.

Case 5. Honey Mintesinot, half orphan who grew up with his poor mother, expressed his positive values as follows:

>A problem and failure teaches me a solution. You do not need to give up. At one point I had nothing in my pocket even for a cup of tea since I had no market for my products, (house furniture). I always think that if I lose today I may gain tomorrow. This was the engine inside me that helped me to work hard. Since I want to be an investor….I had short term and long term plans. I hope I would be… I don’t fear risks. If you fear risks, always it becomes obstacle for your action. I tried every opportunity. I always remember my childhood difficulties resulted from poverty. I do not want to see that misery again… I interact and communicate with all (people) according to their needs… with olds, children and youth. People like me and my services…. This in turn created market for my products and services…. Thanks God you can see that I am becoming successful…I have cars, hotel etc.

Thus, Honey’s story shows us that his good personality attracted market for his services and facilitated his development. His achievement motivation and determination to achieve his goals also boosted his entrepreneurial and industrious sprits to have what he wishes in the future. All of his stories indicate that he has interesting sense of purpose and committed to achieve his goals. Therefore, it is clear from his story that one of the major sources of his success is the above positive values. Now everybody knows that Honey is a young investor in Arba Minch town.

- **Industriousness and saving**

The hardworking capabilities that they learned from role models and positive friends primarily solved their financial and economic problems. Working in both formal and informal sectors developed the youngster’s social and profit making skills. Hence some of them become economically successful and honored and valued by their community.
and friends. Since they were busy the distanced themselves from substance addiction.

Saving is valued by informants as a means of capital formation. They farther invested on their accumulated capitals on another business. They led their life according to their life plans as well as abstained themselves from unnecessary extravagant activities, occasions and friends. In fact they have valued saving as their future social security. In this case most of them used ‘Equb’ (traditional saving and credit institution) as a driving force to work hard and keep their promise to save. The following case shows the importance of hardworking in child resilience to adversities and the consequent socioeconomic achievement.

Case 6. Ashenafi Asnake, an orphan, expressed his hard working abilities in the following way.

…… Since childhood I have engaged in different types of income generating activities. I was shoeshine, Woyala (assistant taxi driver), tutoring children in their home, deacon in orthodox Christian church and etc. Many people encouraged and helped me when they saw my effort to survive. I am also clever in my education. My hard working efforts created me an opportunity to introduce myself for many great peoples in our school and the community. In our school I coordinated anti HIV/AIDS club and I was also member of Red Cross Association. In one occasion I was introduced to the president of Arba Minch University. He again introduced me to Red Cross Association head and Youth Project Coordinator of the Mecane Yesus Church as I was helpless poor. Now these NGOs are helping me financially. They also provided me in the central town shoeshine place and room in collaboration with the Town’s Administration. Now I am very happy I have no problem. I am also saving some amount of money in Banks. I know that I would be more successful in the future. I scored good results in 10th grade national exams and joined the Arba Minch Preparatory School. I am also elected as chairman of the student council in our school. I mediate student problems with the school, attend school meetings and maintain the plasma screen…Since I am active; teachers, students and school management respect and support me. These all activities provided me not only financial sources but also social interaction and income creation skills….
Ashenafi’s story clearly indicates that his hard working abilities and industrious sprites not only solved his immediate financial problems for his basic needs but also laid a base for his future educational, social and business success. This is because he practically trained himself about business skills and social interactions as he has involved in various kinds of income generating activities and started enjoy its fruits early.

Analytical Summary of the protective factors and developmental assets

The 30 children and young adults’ competence was the outcome of their internal strengths and external support and encouragements. They enjoyed different types of protective factors. Some of them enjoyed proper socializations: their family members provided them firm and consistent advice and guidance about life skills and moral values with love and affection in actions and interactions. Those informants were taken to work places and religious centers by their family members where they learned hardworking and morality. This helped them to develop dependable behavior and good work ethics. They were encouraged to do things independently and orally blessed after task accomplishment which in turn heightened their self-esteem and autonomy. Consequently they developed their coping abilities with adversities. In addition, they took early responsibility through participating in income generating activities and problem solving discussions in the family where they learned saving, profit making and social skills. They also realized that they are capable and valuable to improve their own and their families’ life. Moreover, the majority of successful informants were attached to positive and productive peers and role model individuals in the community. Their positive and productive friends provided them appropriate information for life direction and resources in critical moments so as to create income, achieve in their education, sustain their job or recover from substance addictions. Role model individuals also encouraged them to search their own talents and exploit the surrounding opportunities. They learned creativity and problem solving skills from positive role models, who are around them.

On the other hand, the other groups of successful informants enjoyed material, financial and technical supports in critical moments (e.g. when they lost parents, failed in national exams, starting small trade and were new comers to the town) from kin groups, NGOs and the
government. As a result, they restarted their education, expanded their enterprise or trade and finally became successful. It also helped them to increase their self-confidence and optimism as they felt that they were not helpless and have some control over challenges around them.

The successful children and young adults have individual strengths and qualities. They have planned critically and resourcefully. They asked and consulted appropriate individuals and institutions when they needed help. These qualities helped them to create and exploit opportunities effectively. Many of them had good personalities and enjoyed acceptance among their friends and employers. Their good personalities, dependable behaviors, and industrious spirits assisted them to sustain their job, get market for their products and generate material and financial supports from productive friends and government bodies. They also equipped themselves with positive values such as achievement motivation, persistence, and commitment for learning and optimism. These in turn served them as an engine to work hard and achieve their goals and reject negative peer pressures. In addition, they valued work and saving highly. Those informants were industrious and saved what they earned by leading their life through planning and staying away from extravagant situations. Their hard working abilities created them capital, knowledge, skills and social acceptance as well as distanced them from antisocial activities (e.g. substance abuse and crime). Hence, they have not only avoided exploitative and abusive situations or recovered from abuses/exploitations but also finally became successful (socially, economically and academically). Their socioeconomic achievements are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

**Achievement Indicators**

This section focuses on the indicators of success achieved by the 30 children and young adults who have overcome their early life challenges and tragedies. The major achievements are manifested in their current economic and social positions. The economic success of informants may be explained in terms of the amount of accumulated capitals (cash and kind) at their disposal, and source and amount of income they earn. The social achievements are expressed through their academic attainment, social positions and responsibilities in communities and the current status of living standards.
Though all the 30 informants have escaped poverty and become self-reliant, their achievement levels vary depending on their age, sex, academic levels and intensities of risks they encountered. Thus, some of them have become more successful economically to the extent of becoming investors (having more than 500,000 Birr capital and workers under their organization). Others managed to earn university/college diplomas and degrees, and practically implemented their knowledge and skills to solve their socio economic problems. Some of them are still in schools, and are performing quite well. Those who are below 17 years of age are mainly self-reliant after overcoming challenges in their early life. Many have already recovered from traumas of abuses or challenging situations they encountered. They are hopeful in terms of thriving in life in future.

I. Indicators of Economic Achievements

a. Amount and Sources of Income

This section is about types of job and amount of monthly income that informants earn. Even though the amount and sources of income vary from an individual to another, almost all of them have become self-sufficient by creating their respective sustainable livelihood strategies. Many of them have a monthly income of more than 1000 Birr. As indicated in table 1 below, some of them became investors with the capital of more than 500,000 Birr and earn a monthly income of more than 5000 Birr. Beyond improving the living conditions of their families, some created job opportunities for others.

Table 1: Monthly income of 30 informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Type of Job</th>
<th>No of informants</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Monthly income in Birr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>700-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No of informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Government workers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Merchants with</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that the majority of informants become civil servants (as diploma and degree holders), merchants with the capital of more than 40,000 Birr, investors with the capital of more than 500,000 Birr and technical experts working for private organizations or own workshops as carpenters, builders and the like.

On the other hand, some orphans and destitute children became self-reliant by creating their own income sources though they are in primary or high schools. In this regard Tewodros Millashe, who is 16 years old, reported the source of income and his creativities as follows:

… Since we were poor I have been shoeshine and bicycle renter. My mother supported me to start Equb\(^4\). I collected 800 Birr form Equb. With the money I bought own bicycle. With the bicycle I distributed chat for shops in the town. When I am in school my younger brother rents it. I also entered another Equb and bought additional bicycle. Now I have two bicycles and qiyoske (small shop). I also helped my mother to renew our house…. If I fail in education I will be merchant and rich person...

The 30 informants’ economic achievements can be compared with the living conditions and income levels of the majority of people in

\(^4\) Equb is traditional credit and saving associations in Ethiopia which is highly preferred by people in lower socioeconomic statuses as it serves as a driving force for saving
Arba Minch town as well as the minimum wage level that is 320 Birr monthly salary, in the country. As it is indicated in table 2 the majority of informants have monthly income more than 2000 Birr whereas more than 50% of the population in the town earns monthly income of less than 450 Birr (ROSA, 2007). In addition, 14% of the population is unemployed and 11% engaged in casual works with monthly income of Birr 100-300 (ROSA, 2007). Moreover, in Arba Minch, quite a large number of the population engaged in low income generating activities such as petty trade and daily labor with monthly income less than 200 Birr (ROSA, 2007). Hence, the majority of the population is living in deep poverty without fulfilling basic needs. Some of the informants’ former friends (e.g. shoeshine, street vendors, daily laborers, etc) have monthly income less than 300 Birr.

b. Capital accumulation

The successful children and youngsters have accumulated economic resource in kind cash in savings. Many of them have clothing shops, supermarkets with more than 40,000 Birr capital, service providing economic resources such as Isuzu and minibuses cars cafeterias, modern living and renting houses with the capital of more than 500,000 Birr. The following table is the type and amount of capital possessed by the resilient children and youngsters.

Table 2: The 30 informants’ capitals (in cash and Kind)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Enterprise and other economic resources</th>
<th>Property&amp; estimated value in cash per head</th>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cash in savings</th>
<th>No of informants</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Small supermarkets and clothing shops</td>
<td>40,000 birr and above</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 million and above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Construction and furniture shops</td>
<td>20,000 and above</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>500,000 - 1 million</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Service providing resources (cars, cafeterias, houses, photo)</td>
<td>500,000 and above</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>100,000 - 500,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informants’ economic achievements are also manifested in their economic role in their family. Many of resilient informants improved their families’ economic status by paying tuition fee for their younger brothers and sisters, reconstructing mother’s or father’s houses, some of them have bought lands, oxen and mules for their family in rural areas. In this case Paris Jamal reported about success and economic assistance to his family as follows:

…I bought land, horse, and cattle for my father to be blessed. I like his blessing, I feel secured when I am blessed with him. I still send money for him for blessing. Now my father is a well known rich person in the village (Silte Worabe). You can see I have my own house. I have also more than 15 workers in my three Cafeterias. I have opened shops with more than 60,000 Birr capital for my brothers around the market in Shecha...

In fact those of 8 informants in the fourth row of table 2, who able to accumulate capitals estimated more than 500,000 Birr became investors and created jobs for more than 100 individuals in their organizations and enterprises.

II. Indicators of Social Achievements

a. Social Positions and Responsibilities

More than half of the 30 successful individuals are socially honored in their respective communities. They are honored, respected among their friends and colleagues. Hence they have taken various kinds of responsibilities in their schools, churches ‘Equbs’, and cooperatives etc. The following table shows the informants social positions and responsibilities:
Table 3: Various kinds of responsibilities the 30 informants were/are assigned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Types of responsibilities assigned</th>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Judges and chairpersons for <em>Equbs</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leaders and coordinator of students councils and clubs in schools</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chairman of MSEs associations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Heads of justice and security and youth affairs coordinators in kebele administrations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Team leaders in government and private organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Religious affairs coordinators in orthodox and protestant churches</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those who have been perpetrators of antisocial activities, it is the greatest social acceptance to become youth coordinators, *Equb* leader and etc. In this regard Tamiru Demissie reported his social and economic achievements as follows:

… I thank God… My life is totally changed. When I was urban gang, people were afraid of me. They suspected me. My hair style was terrifying, I was gambler and drunkard. I was just like today’s ‘Adegegna Bozene’ (terrifying idle youth who is ready for criminal acts or threatens peace and security in a town). But Jesus changed my life. Now I am changing others’ lives by preaching the Bible. I am also member of council of elders in our church. I am HIV project coordinator. I have all I wished…. The house, the shop, the money, the job and the degree…

b. Academic performance and achievements

Almost all of the 30 informants are very enthusiastic for learning and many of them achieved well in various kinds of educational institutions. Half of them earned diplomas and degrees after they overcome early difficulties in their life. Educational achievements further solved their social-economic problems through their knowledge and skills obtained from the recognized colleges, universities and personal
readings. For instance, those who have construction and furniture workshops and professional workers in garages and constructions are diploma graduates in Auto mechanics or woodworks from Arba Minch Mecane Yeses Vocational College. The following table shows the overall academic levels and achievements of the 30 informants.

Table 4: Academic levels, performances and certificates of the 30 informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Academic levels and type of certificates</th>
<th>No of informants</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st degree holders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Diploma holders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preparatory students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Construction/ trainings/ certificates and driving license holders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High school students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Status of living Standard

Many of the 30 children and young adults have started to lead comfortable lives. No one is a street boy or suffers from shortage of basic needs as to their early life. Almost all of the 30 informant are living in cemented and quality rooms which are full- fledged with all modern house furniture. Six of them have built their own living villas in the town with the capital of more than 100,000 Birr cash. Their friends are no more street boys, shoe shiners or criminals. But they spend times with investors, religious leaders and honorable people the town. In this regard kashun Admasu comparatively reported his present and past living standards as follows:

… When I was street vendor I was dirty and my clothing was torn. Nobody wanted to see me. I was also ashamed of it. We were living in old and dirty mud house. Now you can see that I
have built five rooms which are cemented and high quality for me and my mother. I have all modern electronic materials: The television, the CD taps the sofa …. You can see I bought the latest mobile phone by 3000 Birr. I thank God. I eat whatever food I like and wear a quality clothing … I have great friends like Honey and Yalew (hotel owners). We eat and drink together during Equb days. The kebele administration also assigned me as security controller…

Kasahun’s narration clearly indicates that he is enjoying high standard of living. His own cemented living rooms, the latest mobile phone, the modern house furniture, the quality of food and clothing he is enjoying and his rich friends show us that he is leading comfortable middle class living standards (in Ethiopian context). Thus, for someone who had been suffering from impacts of absolute poverty such a living condition is one of the concrete indicators of socio economic achievement.

**Conclusion**

The findings of this study show that there are many risks that children and youth in Arba Minch town encounter. A large number of children and youngsters face challenging situations in their family, school and community environments.

Risk factors in the family made a large number of children vulnerable to various adversities. Poverty appeared to be the major challenge that weakened the economic power of many families to satisfy children’s developmental needs. Some families were disintegrating due to divorce, parental alcoholism, loss of parents, etc. In many cases families are not properly socializing their children. This is because either they were rendered powerless or they were unaware of the positive child and youth development. Hence, they are abusing and exploiting their children. In fact a large number of children are growing up with drug (e.g. chat and shabiha) addicted families. Many families are not teaching children life skills and positive moral values. That is why some children were easily induced by negative peer pressures to substance abuse. Many families are not working with other socio cultural and welfare institutions (e.g. churches, NGOs and schools) for their children’s intellectual and moral development. Therefore, it was such unfavorable situations and
neglects that forced some children to leave homes for the streets and the consequent abuses.

Many government schools and their educational systems seem to be not effective so as to facilitate children’s successful development. The teaching learning environment is not safe and comfortable. Some of the government schools are not functioning well. Some of its problems found within the school system. Others are in the community (e.g. students’ substance addiction). And the rest are national. But generally schools have administrative, financial and technical problems. Moreover, they are not working closely and effectively with families and other welfare organizations to financially empower itself so as to fulfill teaching learning facilities. The number of role model and supportive teachers is decreasing. But these complicated causes and effects of the low qualities of education need another study.

On the other hand, the community environment is not conducive for positive child and youth development. Risks in the community are interrelated. One risk factor is leading to another risks and vulnerabilities. For instance, poverty and unemployment combined with absence of productive youth and child recreational centers are pushing many children and youngsters to drug abuses and in some cases criminal acts. Some of the risk factors in the community are local (e.g. chat) and others are national (poverty). The rest risks are global (e.g. drug trafficking and illegal movies). Many of children became victims of the unhealthy social transformations due to global influences and ineffective local and national systems. Locally, in many cases, elderly, teachers and religious leaders are not guiding or advising children about life skills and positive values. In fact many people became negative role models by inducing children for crimes and substance abuse mainly by consuming shisha and chat. Besides, the justice and security systems in the town seem not effective to bring sustainable peace and security. Moreover, nationally there are no appropriate policies and directions for positive child development. Thus, the above risks are threatening the moral and intellectual developments of many children in the town.

However, within these risk situations some children and young adults overcame their early life adversities and finally became successful. The informants’ competence and socio-economic achievements are the results of their individual qualities and external supports and encouragements. The resilience capabilities are the cumulative effects of children’s internal strengths and external developmental inputs from...
families, peers, some teachers, religious leaders, neighbors, government and welfare organizations concerned with positive child and youth developments.

Even though there were socio economic problems in their family, some family members properly socialized their children through actions and interactions. Those families were aware of and concerned with their children’s successful development. Consequently, children developed life skills and dependable behaviors early. Many of them found positive peers and role models in the community from whom they learned life alternatives so as to cope with challenges or recover from stressful situations. Some have also obtained moral education in religious institutions. This was due to the support of their families or positive friends. There were financial, technical, material and idea supports from kin groups, NGOs, government organizations and teachers at the moment they were helpless or powerless. It was the proper functioning of these systems and institutions which empowered children’s capacity to cope with challenges. These supports became effective as it reached children in critical moments of their life. Thus, they were be able to recover from traumas resulted from adverse situation and expanded their small economic enterprises. Hence, children in difficult socioeconomic conditions need external supports and encouragements at the moment they need help to have sense of security and motivations to achieve life goals.

Moreover, it was their individual qualities such as hard working, saving, resourceful planning and problem solving skills that helped them to use external supports and exploit surrounding resources and opportunities effectively. Therefore, in addition to individual strengths and qualities familial and social environment characteristics could increase the development of resilience capacities in children who are growing up in adversities. It is through consistent provisions of caring or supportive relations, positive and high expectations and opportunities for productive life experiences so that their internal resilience abilities are enhanced. Children in difficulties need supports and encouragements from families, neighbors, positive peers, religious leaders, welfare organizations and government bodies so as to overcome challenges. Children’s competence and the final success (economic and educational attainments) are the outcome of internal strengths and the proper functioning of some of the concerned individuals, socio-cultural and administrative systems and institutions around.
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