

INDIVIDUAL CASE STORY | LABOUR SYSTEM

## AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE SERVICE ENABLES WOMEN LIKE KALKIDAN TO REMAIN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

**“THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE WAY I FEEL BECAUSE I'M A WORKING PARENT WHO MAKES MONEY TO SUPPORT MY FAMILY.”**

Those are the words shared by 32-year-old Kalkidan during an annual learning workshop organised by LIWAY. Kalkidan is a mother of young twins and an 11-year-old child who goes to school at Dagmawi Menilik Primary School.

Before having her twin boys, Kalkidan worked at the consumers outlet shop “shemachoch”, which is owned by the consumers cooperative. She used the income to support her family because her husband’s income is insufficient as he is diabetic and is unable to work long hours to earn more money.

However, following the arrival of her twins, Kalkidan had to stay home to care for them and she and her husband struggled to provide for their family. That was until Kalkidan learned about the affordable childcare service at Dagmawi Menilik School from her neighbour.



Kalkidan went to the woreda to register and secure a spot at the facility. She received a letter from the woreda confirming her eligibility and went to the centre and registered her twin boys who were just over a year old at the time. The school and woreda allowed her to pay for only one child at 500 ETB due to her economic situation and her husband’s condition.

The affordable childcare service has enabled Kalkidan to get back to work. She opened a small coffee shop in her neighborhood, from which she is earning more income than her previous employment. She now also has more time to participate in the social life of her community and to care for her husband. She is thinking about expanding her business to earn additional income to support her family.

Kalkidan is also seeing positive changes in her children. She has found that they are growing stronger and more social, and they are learning to speak, which she attributes to their attendance at the childcare centre. She believes it's a perfect place for her children’s overall growth and development. She also appreciates the level of service at the centre and that there is a platform where parents can gather to discuss the quality of the centre’s services. If there is anything that can be improved, they suggest it to the childcare coordinator and committee members.

One of the improvements Kalkidan would like to see is service provision on weekends so she can manage her business on those days. It has been agreed that there will be negotiations with the school and nannies regarding how much parents would pay for services on weekends and school closures and summer breaks. The school is also considering expansion to accommodate increased demand for the service as parents prefer this centre due to its proximity, affordability, and easy transition to the next level (nursery and kindergarten) for their children.

Dagmawi Menelik Primary School childcare center is providing affordable services for **70 parents** and has created jobs for **4 nannies and one coordinator**. Kokebe Tsibha Primary School and Nefas Silk Polytechnic College have also opened their own centres and started service provision. A total of **106 women** have accessed affordable childcare services and earn additional income to support their family from their existing employment and new jobs. These centres are charging service fees ranging from 350 to 500 ETB per month for one child, which is considerably lower than the commercial childcare services.



The affordable childcare service is a market-based intervention developed in partnership between LIWAY and several public institutions. The opportunity for the intervention was identified through LIWAY’s assessment of how the labour market system disadvantages or excludes poor women and youth. The assessment highlighted a lack of pro-poor childcare services, which constrains low-income women from participating in the workforce. Childcare services in public institutions primarily cater to employees. Although they have sufficient operational space to service the broader community, they lack key facilities, as well as the ability to fully cover nanny fees due to provision of free services to employees. LIWAY shared investments to equip the centres with additional childcare facilities and employ trained nannies to test a new model of using surplus space at public institutions to extend childcare services to low-income women in the community.