



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva

**Employment Sector  
Employment Working Paper No. 141**

**2013**

**Disabled Beggars in Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia**

Nora Groce and Barbara Murray  
with Marie Loeb, Carlo Tramontano, Jean Francois Trani and Asfaw Mekonnen

Skills and  
Employability  
Department

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First published 2013

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*ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Groce, Nora; Murray, Barbara; Loeb, Marie; Tramontano, Carlo; Trani, Jean Francois; Mekonnen, Asfaw

Disabled beggars in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia / Nora Groce and Barbara Murray, with Marie Loeb, Carlo Tramontano, Jean Francois Trani and Asfaw Mekonnen ; International Labour Office, Employment Sector, Skills and Employability Department. - Geneva: ILO, 2013

Employment working paper; ISSN 1999-2939; 1999-2947 (web pdf) ; No.141

International Labour Office; Skills and Employability Dept.

begging / disabled person / disability / rights of disabled people / poverty / urban area / Ethiopia

13.01.2

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Printed in Switzerland

## Preface

The primary goal of the ILO is to contribute, with member States, to the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, a goal embedded in the ILO Declaration 2008 on *Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*,<sup>1</sup> and which has now been widely adopted by the international community.

In order to support member States and the social partners to reach this goal, the ILO pursues a Decent Work Agenda which comprises four interrelated areas: respect for fundamental worker's rights and international labour standards, employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue. Explanations of this integrated approach and related challenges are contained in a number of key documents: in those explaining and elaborating the concept of decent work,<sup>2</sup> in the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), and in the Global Employment Agenda.

The Global Employment Agenda was developed by the ILO through tripartite consensus of its Governing Body's Employment and Social Policy Committee. Since its adoption in 2003 it has been further articulated and made more operational and today it constitutes the basic framework through which the ILO pursues the objective of placing employment at the centre of economic and social policies.<sup>3</sup>

The Employment Sector is fully engaged in the implementation of the Global Employment Agenda, and is doing so through a large range of technical support and capacity building activities, advisory services and policy research. As part of its research and publications programme, the Employment Sector promotes knowledge-generation around key policy issues and topics conforming to the core elements of the Global Employment Agenda and the Decent Work Agenda. The Sector's publications consist of books, monographs, working papers, employment reports and policy briefs.<sup>4</sup>

The *Employment Working Papers* series is designed to disseminate the main findings of research initiatives undertaken by the various departments and programmes of the Sector. The working papers are intended to encourage exchange of ideas and to stimulate debate. The views expressed are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the ILO.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs  
Executive Director  
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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/download/dg\\_announce\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/download/dg_announce_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See the successive Reports of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference: *Decent work* (1999); *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* (2001); *Working out of poverty* (2003).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/gea>. And in particular: *Implementing the Global Employment Agenda: Employment strategies in support of decent work*, "Vision" document, ILO, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/employment>.



# Contents

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
INTERVIEWS.....	5
FOCUS GROUPS .....	5
SURVEY .....	5
<i>Veracity of informants</i> .....	6
<i>Data analysis</i> .....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: BEGGING AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.....</b>	<b>7</b>
AN URBAN PHENOMENON.....	7
TOLERANCE OF BEGGARS .....	8
WHAT MAKES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DECIDE TO BEG?.....	10
<i>Lack of social support networks</i> .....	10
<i>Internalized social stigma</i> .....	10
<i>Education and skills levels</i> .....	11
<i>Limited employment prospects</i> .....	11
<i>Social protection floors</i> .....	12
<i>Downward spiral of poverty</i> .....	12
ORGANIZED BEGGING, FORCED BEGGING AND INTENTIONAL MAIMING .....	13
LITERATURE ON INTERVENTION.....	14
DISABILITY AND DISABLED BEGGARS IN ETHIOPIA.....	15
<b>CHAPTER 3: BEGGARS WITH DISABILITIES IN ADDIS ABABA –PRELIMINARY PROFILE.....</b>	<b>18</b>
SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION .....	18
<i>Sex distribution</i> .....	18
<i>Age distribution</i> .....	18
<i>Type of disability</i> .....	19
<i>Cause of disability</i> .....	19
<i>Onset of disability</i> .....	20
<i>Marital status</i> .....	20
<i>Children</i> .....	21
<i>Education</i> .....	21
<i>Vocational training/skills building</i> .....	23
<i>Place of birth</i> .....	24
<i>Reason for coming to the city</i> .....	24
<i>Livelihood before starting to beg</i> .....	25
SECTION 2: LIFE AS A BEGGAR.....	26
<i>Duration of work as a beggar</i> .....	26
<i>Reason for starting to beg</i> .....	27
<i>Income from begging</i> .....	27
<i>Earnings from other activities</i> .....	30
<i>Preference for extra jobs or begging</i> .....	30
<i>Attempts to stop begging</i> .....	31
<i>Savings and longer-term financial planning</i> .....	31
<i>Strategies for begging</i> .....	32
<i>Poverty – living conditions and material assets</i> .....	34
<i>Social networks and support systems</i> .....	40
<i>Views and experience</i> .....	42
SECTION 3: PLANS FOR THE FUTURE .....	44
<i>Reasons for continuing to beg</i> .....	45
SECTION 4: AWARENESS OF DISABILITY RIGHTS.....	46
<i>Knowledge of organizations for disabled people</i> .....	46

<i>Contact with/help from these organizations.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Laws to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Awareness of the UNCRPD.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<b>CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>48</b>
THEME 1: LIFE BEFORE BEGGING.....	48
<i>Demographics.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Nuclear families, extended families and social support networks.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Education, skills and work histories.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Poverty.....</i>	<i>58</i>
THEME 2: WORKING AS A BEGGAR, DAILY ROUTINES AND BEGGING STRATEGIES.....	59
<i>Violence and abuse.....</i>	<i>61</i>
THEME 3: LIFE BEYOND BEGGING.....	62
<i>Attitudes of people in the community (including other people with disabilities).....</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Links to DPOs and other disability advocacy efforts.....</i>	<i>63</i>
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>65</b>
FUTURE RESEARCH.....	69
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	70
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>APPENDIX A.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>APPENDIX B – SURVEY TOOL.....</b>	<b>81</b>

## Acknowledgements

This project was initiated by Professor Nora Groce, Director of the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, University College London (UCL) in collaboration with Barbara Murray, Senior Disability Specialist, Skills and Employability Department at the International Labour Organization, Geneva. Funding support was generously provided through the ILO/Irish Aid Partnership Programme. Marie Loeb, student intern the direction of Barbara Murray, undertook a comprehensive literature review during the summer of 2010 that has contributed greatly to Chapter 1. Asfaw Mekonnen of Addis Ababa, consultant, worked as Field Coordinator for the project, ably and effectively organizing field data collection and data entry and contributing to the analysis through his insights and comments. Dr Jean-Francois Trani and Dr Carlo Tramontano at the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre at UCL assisted by undertaking the statistical analysis of data. ILO/Irish Aid project staff in Ethiopia, Fantahun Melles, National Programme Coordinator, and Pia Korpinen, Regional Technical Officer, were exceptionally helpful at every stage of this project, facilitating the study through their broad expertise and guidance as well as their collegial support. Dr Miles from the UK located a series of historical publications that added to the literature review as well as to the overall understanding of begging cross-culturally. Pia Korpinen and Ellie Cole at UCL reviewed the document. Anna Kealy and Jane Auvré made valuable contributions in copy-editing, formatting and finalizing the document for publication.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CBR	Community-based rehabilitation
DPOs	Disabled People's Organizations
ETB	Ethiopian birr
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UCL	University College London
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPFA	United Nations Population Fund



## Introduction

This study of people with disabilities who work as beggars on the streets of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is one of the first studies to have asked disabled beggars what their daily lives are like. Although references to disabled beggars are found throughout history (Kaiser, 1998; Lipkin, 2005; Lu, 2005; Navon, 1998; Norton, 1895) in fact almost nothing is known about people with disabilities who work as beggars in the twenty-first century. This is in many ways ironic, because disabled beggars cannot be more visible. They can be seen on the streets and on the steps of churches, mosques and temples worldwide, in the marketplace and public gathering spots. Indeed, they knock on people's car windows and appear on their very doorsteps. It is not that people cannot see them; it is that they may not notice them.

Part of this oversight may be cultural. In many societies it is assumed that disability and begging are inevitably linked. Certainly, throughout the literature, there is a strong association between poverty, disability and begging. If a person is born with a disability or becomes disabled, it is often assumed that most or all other options close and the only choice left to meet basic needs is to beg.

It is further assumed that people who beg do so because they are trapped in a "cycle of poverty", that there is a strong association between disability and poverty and that begging is an activity or adaptation of last resort. Poor people are at greater risk of becoming disabled through lack of adequate housing, food, clean water, basic sanitation and safe working environments. People with disabilities, in turn, are at increased risk of becoming poor through restricted access to education, health care, job training and employment opportunities. These factors, in combination with the effects of stigma and social isolation, limit the ability of people with disabilities to be full participants in their societies and to find employment that will support themselves and their families (Mont, 2008; Braithwaite and Mont, 2008; Trani et al, 2010; Groce et al, 2011). This has economic and social implications not only for the person with a disability but also for the household in which he or she lives, and increases the likelihood of turning to begging.

Despite this, the global development community, as well as the global disability advocacy community, has paid little attention to men, women and children with disabilities who make their living in whole or in part by begging. This gap in knowledge and focus is particularly striking because, worldwide, begging is a common and visible form of making a living outside the home for people with disabilities.

This study brings together qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the lives of people with disabilities who beg in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is certainly a country where disability and begging are traditionally linked. When interviewing government officials and members of the non-governmental organization (NGO) community, as well as when discussing the study with members of the general public, Ethiopians routinely reported that they disapproved of begging in general and referred to a common Amharic saying: "Why should you beg? You have arms, don't you? You have legs?" The implication, of course, is that if you do not "have arms" or

“have legs” – if, in other words, you are disabled – then begging is understandable. So little is known about people with disabilities who work as beggars that many basic questions remain largely unexplored: What alternative forms of employment exist for these individuals? Where and with whom do these people live? What family and social support networks do they have? What happens to them over the course of their lives? What are the links between education, job training and the decision of whether or not to beg? How do disabled women fare on the streets, given the significant disadvantage they face even in comparison to men with disabilities? What is the interplay between violence, disability and begging?

There are many other questions as well. Are individuals who beg able to keep the money they collect or are they put on the streets by organized gangs who take the money? Is there any evidence of a practice of maiming individuals (especially children) to disable them and use them as beggars? This is a practice that has been referenced in literature and folklore for centuries, although it has almost never been documented. Is it really the case that disabled individuals who beg bring in far more money than others who choose not to beg, a view repeatedly expressed by many disability advocates and experts interviewed in the course of this research? What does the surrounding community think of these people? What do local disability advocacy groups think of these practices? This exploratory study sets out to address some of these questions and to provide an initial understanding of the lives of disabled beggars in one specific community, urban Addis Ababa, with particular emphasis on identifying the reasons which brought them to beg and their current living conditions.

The study yielded an intriguing set of results that identify: the complex set of issues with which disabled beggars grapple; a series of points where targeted intervention by governments, UN agencies, NGOs and disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) could help break the on-going cycle of disability and poverty; and choices that lead some men and women with disabilities to beg.

The study was undertaken by the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, University College London (UCL) on behalf of the International Labour Organization (ILO), with funding and field-based support and guidance from disability-related projects of the ILO/Irish Aid Partnership Programme.

Chapter 1 of this report provides an overview of the research procedures and methodology. Chapter 2 is a literature review. Chapter 3 presents the findings collected through the survey, focus group sessions and key informant interviews. In Chapter 4, the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study are merged and discussed in greater detail. Chapter 5 provides conclusions and recommendations for policy, programming and areas for further research.

## Chapter 1: Research procedures and methodology

This research study set out to provide an initial understanding of the lives of disabled beggars with particular emphasis on determining social and economic factors, and sequences of events or patterns of behaviour that are common to people with disabilities who now work as beggars. Additional attention was directed to identifying possible areas of intervention that might sever the links between disability and poverty. There were three main goals:

- to collect baseline data on a group of disabled street beggars by asking them how they came to beg, what their lives are like on a daily basis and how would they like their futures to be;
- to identify points where interventions to break the cycle between living with a disability and begging might be implemented;
- to develop, pilot and validate a survey tool and appropriate set of open-ended qualitative questions that can be used for a larger, multi-country comparative study of disabled street beggars to be undertaken by the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre in collaboration with the ILO, Geneva.

To this end, four key questions framed the study:

- What was life like for those individuals interviewed before they became beggars?
- What factors influenced their decisions to turn to begging to make a living?
- What is daily life like for people with disabilities who beg – with particular reference to income, access to food and housing, daily routine and social support networks?
- What does the future look like to these people with disabilities who beg? What do they hope for? What is their knowledge of development efforts and support systems available for people with disabilities? What is their awareness of DPOs and new laws, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which should be offering improvements in their lives?

Because very little research has been done on beggars in general, and even less done specifically on disabled beggars, in order to develop as comprehensive an understanding as possible, a “mixed methods approach” was designed, beginning with a critical literature review, which was followed by individual interviews, focus groups and a survey.<sup>5</sup>

### Literature review

The study began in 2008 with an initial review of the literature on begging in general and disabled beggars in particular. Searches were made in the international development, global health, economics and the historical and social sciences literatures. This initial review was expanded through a

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<sup>5</sup> Ethical clearance for this project was obtained from University College London (University College London Ethical Review Board # 1967/003).

further literature review undertaken in the summer of 2009 at ILO Geneva (Loeb, unpublished). In combination, these reviews form the basis of Chapter 2.

Information was drawn from four complementary sources:

- academic books and journals;
- UN and bilateral governmental websites and documents;
- resources compiled by NGOs and DPOs on disability, development and poverty reduction; and
- popular media sources, including newspapers, magazines and press releases.

All references to begging or beggars located were reviewed, paying particular attention to the more recent materials (from 1980 to 2012) from developing countries and to materials that focused on or included references to disabled beggars. Special effort was made to identify and review evidence-based studies.

A comprehensive grid for analysis was developed, focusing on: 1) identifying any available statistics on begging among disabled children and adults; 2) locating and reviewing papers and reports that address theory, policy or practice on either begging in general or disabled beggars in particular; 3) finding information or descriptions of poverty or livelihood programmes for beggars that were either disability-inclusive or that specifically encouraged adults with disabilities to take advantage of services offered to general populations; and 4) reviewing publications that linked begging among people with disabilities to poverty, unemployment, empowerment or human rights issues.

In the review, publications that specifically focus on beggars were found to be rare, and studies and articles that provide reliable data or thoughtful insight into the lives of such people, rarer still. The review yielded many passing references to “disabled beggars” in history and literature, but only a few peer-review articles on begging in general were located in the international development, global health or human rights literatures. Even fewer articles were found that have focused on people with disabilities who beg. Additional information in the grey literature, including NGO and DPO newsletters and websites, was also reviewed – although as a body, these accounts are largely anecdotal in nature and provide little insight into either the extent of the problem or the interplay of social, psychological or economic factors involved.

The reason for this lack of attention is unclear. It has been suggested that this population is unusually difficult to reach because beggars themselves are unwilling or unable to speak with researchers, development workers or human rights advocates. Some suggest that those who beg are ashamed of the lives they lead, fearful of the police or worried about criminals or other “handlers” who have dominion over them and would punish them for speaking out (ILO, 2004a; Malone, 2009). All of these issues are possibilities, but it is also quite possible that many who work on development and poverty issues have overlooked this group, assuming either that they cannot be reached or that new programmes and laws to improve the

lives of people with disabilities will eventually “trickle down” and include them as well.

## **Interviews**

Qualitative field work began with 24 open-ended interviews of people with disabilities aged 18 to 60 working as beggars in Addis Ababa to identify and refine key questions that would form the basis of the subsequent focus groups and survey tool. Interviews took place in two locations near large churches, one in the centre of Addis Ababa and the second in the outskirts of the city.

Informants were chosen at random from the crowd of beggars at each location. Selection criteria were:

- age (18 years or above): a focus was placed on speaking to disabled adults of varying ages – young, middle-aged and elderly. Because issues involving disabled children who beg were anticipated to be different from those of working-age adults, in this study attention was confined to disabled adults.
- disability type: people with a range of disability types would be interviewed (i.e. individuals with physical, mental health, sensory (deafness, blindness) and intellectual disabilities); and
- distribution by sex: it was hoped to interview an equal number of males and females; however, as discussed in greater detail below, a higher percentage of males to females was found to be working as beggars and the information gathered reflects this sex distribution.

Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes and was conducted in Amharic through an interpreter. The interviews were conducted near the begging site but those interviewed were asked to sit in or near the project’s car in order to make it possible for the interviews to be conducted in private.

Informants were asked a short series of open-ended questions regarding their personal history, experiences and expectations, with the initial set of questions based on the literature review and the preceding discussions with in-country experts and advocates.

## **Focus groups**

A series of questions was developed for the focus group based on these preliminary in-depth interviews. In July 2010, six focus groups were held in Addis Ababa, with each group comprising between seven and 12 disabled adults who worked as beggars. Four focus groups were “mixed”, one was all male and one all female. In all, 64 individuals were included in the six focus groups. As in the preliminary interviews, the focus group discussions were conducted in Amharic with interpretation.

## **Survey**

Based on the literature search and findings of the preliminary interviews and focus group discussions, a 92-item survey tool was devised, with questions grouped into the four categories identified at the beginning of this chapter. This survey was piloted and validated over the course of three

weeks in July 2010. A team of 11 fieldworkers interviewed 100 disabled street beggars in ten different areas of Addis Ababa. Subjects were identified on the day of the survey, and fieldworkers selected subjects for a balance of age, sex and type of disability as far as possible, given who was begging at that location chosen at the time of the field visits.

Those participating in the survey were approached in their place of work, invited to participate in the study, and asked to give verbal consent. The survey was read to each informant and filled out by the trained fieldworker. Because these interviews took time away from begging, each participant was paid 10 Ethiopian birr (ETB) for their time, roughly equivalent to the reported average half-day's income for disabled street beggars, even if they chose to withdraw from the survey once it started.<sup>6</sup>

In all, a total of 188 disabled beggars participated in this pilot project: 24 disabled beggars were interviewed directly by the principal investigator; 64 participated in focus groups; and an additional 100 participated in the survey. In addition, 26 government officials, development and disability advocates were interviewed to supplement the data gathered from the disabled beggars themselves.

To develop an understanding of disability policies and programmes in Ethiopia, the principal investigator also conducted 26 interviews with senior government officials, community leaders, experts at international and national development and human rights NGOs and DPOs in Addis Ababa. Informal discussions with members of the NGO and DPO communities in Ethiopia were also carried out to provide additional understanding of the current situation in the country.

### ***Veracity of informants***

Throughout the literature on begging, as well as in conversations with colleagues, local development experts and members of the Ethiopian public, the researcher was routinely cautioned about the extent to which people who beg can be believed. It is commonly believed that beggars under-report how much money they collect and that for many, their lives are not as difficult nor their choices as restricted as they report.

This study was begun with a sense of caution and a strong concern about the likelihood of obtaining accurate information from informants. While it was impossible to ascertain the veracity of the information obtained from every individual interviewed, there was an overriding consistency in what informants reported about their lives as beggars, including the amounts they collected and what they spent money on. Interviewed and surveyed separately and out of earshot of each other, the consistency of the responses indicates that the data collected were accurate. Indeed, several informants were clear in stating that no one had asked them about their lives before and they were anxious to give accurate information if it could be used to make a difference in the lives of other people with disabilities.

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<sup>6</sup> US\$1.00 was equivalent to 17 ETB at the time of this study, so 10 birr is roughly US\$0.59.

### **Data analysis**

Notes on all interviews and focus groups were collected, transcribed and analysed by the principal investigator, using theme content analysis. Survey data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) in Addis Ababa and cleaned and analysed at the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre in London. Qualitative and quantitative data were then merged to create a final body of material for analysis.

## **Chapter 2: Begging and people with disabilities**

When begging actually began is unknown. Historically, as early as the written word appears, references to begging are found, with some of these references being specifically to disabled beggars. For example, in a Sumerian clay tablet from 2400BC, a supplication to a powerful lord starts with the statement “Thy city lifts its hand like a cripple, O my lord Shu-Sin” (Ostler, 2005:20). References to disabled beggars and begging are found throughout the Bible, in Greek, Roman and Chinese history, as well as in the historical accounts of all other major civilizations.

Presumably, in traditional societies, the needs of vulnerable individuals who cannot provide for themselves are first met by family, extended family or through group action within the community. If these resources are exhausted many traditional societies have as the next step organized sources of social and economic support through clan groups, religious organizations, guilds, associations or other more formal organizations. This kind of giving is often done on an “as needs” basis, with everyone aware of the history and needs of a particularly vulnerable individual or household. But once these resources are expended, if the individual or household has more requirements than can be met with local resources, or if the individual is not willing to conform to the expectations for receiving these resources, then begging may be an option. Begging is an activity which allows an individual to call upon people with whom he or she has no close ties for small donations to meet basic needs. It is a mechanism through which the community ensures that its very poorest members will not starve.

Begging is defined for the purposes of this study as a range of activities through which an individual asks fellow community members or strangers for money, food or other resources on the basis of being poor or needing charitable donation for basic survival, health or religious reasons.

### **An urban phenomenon**

While begging is not unknown in rural areas, beggars in rural hamlets and villages are rare, and even market towns and smaller cities usually have no more than a few beggars visible on the streets. The population base in such communities is simply too small; few beggars can be sustained. Moreover, in relatively small-scale social systems, the identity of the beggar and his or her immediate family would be well known and leaving a relative in dire straits would reflect poorly on the immediate and extended family. In

such communities, families would presumably avoid having a relative beg unless they were absolutely unable to provide the needed support. Urban areas however, can provide both greater anonymity and a broader base for support.

It is perhaps then unsurprising that references to beggars in urban areas are found as soon as city-states begin to appear. The phenomenon appears to be closely tied to the growth of urban areas. The population of beggars in urban areas appear to be both drawn from the surrounding countryside, as well as reflecting rising populations within the cities themselves. Accounts of beggars being drawn from the countryside to urban areas appear throughout the historic record.

There are a number of reasons why beggars are more common in urban areas. People in urban areas tend to be more isolated, know less about their immediate neighbours and little or nothing about people who live in other parts of their city. Identifying the needs of poor and vulnerable individuals cannot therefore be done on the same basis as it is done in smaller-scale societies. Instead, a system whereby many members of the general community each share a small amount of their own wealth – coins, pieces of bread, used clothing – seems to have arisen as a mechanism through which people in true need are provided for. A larger population allows each individual to give a small amount irregularly and still provides for those who beg.

There are a number of reasons why beggars are more common in larger urban areas. Beggars can be more anonymous and autonomous, asking for help without having people know much about them or pass judgement on the beggar or the beggar's family, who may be unable or unwilling to support them.

Beggars in urban areas are also most probably able to make more money, as they are not continually requesting alms from the same limited population, as is the case in rural areas, small towns and villages. While there are few statistics available comparing income of beggars in rural versus urban areas, in a recent popular publication, Kamat (2009) estimates that while rural beggars in India may collect two to three rupees per day, city beggars can collect up to 400 rupees per day (US\$10).

This link between begging and the growth of urban centres is not only of historical interest. The unprecedented growth and increasingly rapid pace of rural to urban migration globally (UN Habitat, 2003) means that begging may well grow rapidly over the coming decades as millions continue to pour into urban areas from the surrounding countryside (Garau et al., 2005). This is compounded in times of political, social and economic instability, or when humanitarian or environmental disaster leaves many with no other options for taking care of themselves and their families (SPHERE, 2011).

## **Tolerance of beggars**

Support is not given to all beggars equally. In every society, there are priorities about which groups deserve support from the general public and charitable organizations and those who, for whatever reasons, do not. Stone (1984) has labelled this as a distinction between the “deserving” and the



“undeserving” poor. Begging by individuals whom the public considers deserving because they are otherwise unable to meet the most basic of needs – such as food, housing, and clothing – is tolerated, while begging by those whom the public perceives as undeserving because they are “lazy” or “choose not to work” is not.

Throughout history, popular culture has also been full of stories and folklore about beggars who take advantage of the system – begging when they do not need to, making far more money than people with “real” jobs or non-disabled individuals pretending to be disabled in order to make money through begging (Conan Doyle, 1892; Kumarappa, 2007; Srivastava, 2008; Al-Harazi, 2006; Swissinfo, 2009; Borland, 2009). Examples of people begging when they are not impoverished have gained considerable press attention in several countries in recent years. In Pakistan, for example, it has been reported that some middle-class people have added to their income through begging after hours (ILO, 2004a). Several years ago, Yemen was abuzz with reports of “seasonal begging”, with families who were otherwise well above the poverty line turning to begging at certain periods of the year to meet electrical bills and health expenses (Al-Harazi, 2006). In Morocco, a government survey found that 62.4 per cent of beggars had bank accounts and a number had procured real estate with the money they collected from begging (Lahcen, 2008).

Individuals who beg but who could really earn their living from other sources – the “undeserving poor” – are almost universally regarded with ill favour. They are seen as taking advantage of a system of support intended only for the very needy. Furthermore, begging by those who are “undeserving” is in many countries also associated with drug or alcohol abuse and antisocial or criminal behaviour, where those who beg are either seen as a threat to the social order or as victims of others who use them for their own ends. For example, in both developed and developing countries within the past decade, there are numerous reports of groups or gangs of people organized to beg, often by criminals or others who seek to profit from their efforts (SwissInfo, 2009; Walker, 2006; Ranga, 2009; Kamat, 2009). Such organized begging is often further linked to corrupt police officers or government officials who are willing to be bribed in order to allow begging to continue undisturbed. This is a factor that further contributes to fear among the general public of the antisocial and illegal nature of such activities (Malone, 2009; ILO, 2004a; Rawa News, 2008).

While begging is also practiced by the non-destitute at certain times, such as during religious pilgrimages, in this literature review no society could be identified which considers begging a viable option for healthy adults of working age. Nor is it considered a viable option for children or the elderly unless they are without other means of support. In general, begging is seen as the last resort for people who have found themselves in a downward spiral of poverty and adversity.

In societies where begging is common, women with infants and children often head the list of those considered justified in begging. This is especially the case in places where there are limited options for women if abandoned or widowed. The frail and elderly also are usually considered worthy. But in all societies, begging has been routinely considered an

acceptable way, and in some cases the only way, for people with disabilities to make a living outside the home.

## **What makes people with disabilities decide to beg?**

Lost in this larger literature is a discussion of why some people with disabilities choose to beg. Presumably, the decision is based on a series of variables, including personal circumstances, the lack or perceived lack of alternatives, the need to provide for oneself, one's family or others, as well as factors such as the psychological makeup of the individual involved. As will be explored in greater detail in this study, a combination of factors appears to be involved.

Cultural attitudes towards begging may also be a factor in the decision to beg or to avoid begging. For example, where autonomy and self-sufficiency is stressed, begging may be considered a particularly demeaning option. Where religious teachings praise people for giving to those less fortunate, begging may be less frowned upon and beggars may be seen as contributing to the welfare of society. As one frail older man sitting on the steps of a Hindu temple in India carefully explained, "I help people get into heaven. They give me alms; they get favour from the gods." (Groce: unpublished interview, 2010).

### ***Lack of social support networks***

The literature suggests that, cross-culturally, a key factor that makes some individuals turn to begging may be the lack of social support networks upon which the very poorest can rely if a crisis or emergency wipes out their limited resources. A large literature in poverty and development has helped identify how a crisis at a critical juncture – a health crisis, the loss of a crop, a home or a set of tools – pushes those who are already poor into destitution. Such factors must also play a part in tipping some disabled people already living in poverty over the dividing line between income-generating work – however limited – and begging (Groce et al., 2011). Statistics currently exist neither on the numbers of people with disabilities who live by begging nor on the percentage of the larger disabled population this constitutes, in Ethiopia or elsewhere. In 1998, it was reported that 11 per cent of all unemployed disabled people in Africa survive solely on money acquired through begging (Ndiaye, 1998), although the relatively small sample size of the study limits the extent to which the findings can be taken as representative for all of Africa. Comparable data are unavailable for other regions.

### ***Internalized social stigma***

The decision to work as a beggar may not be wholly economic. Some have argued that adoption of begging as a means of survival by people with disabilities is linked to their internal acceptance of social stigma (Ebimomi, 2008). Stone (1984) notes that characteristics associated with disability, such as low productivity and helplessness, become cemented into the minds of people with disabilities who prefer to accept the role constructed for them; to beg rather than struggle for employment opportunities. Arguing that people with disabilities beg because they have "internalized" prevailing social stigma, however, often "blames the victim" without considering larger

social, cultural, economic and political pressures. Nor does it explain why some people with disabilities choose to beg and others with comparable disabilities from similar backgrounds do not. Raising yet another point, Thurer (1988) has argued that in some cases, begging is a choice made by people with disabilities to preserve their autonomy, even when alternative sources of support are available to them.

### ***Education and skills levels***

Another key question is why begging might be seen as the best or only option available, either by the individuals or the society in which they live. The literature on poverty and disability indicates that begging may be the result of a series of “knock on” events in the lives of people with disabilities and not just as a single decision based on perceived limited choices of livelihoods. People who are born with a disability or who become disabled in childhood or adolescence are often excluded from mainstream education, face social exclusion from the general community, and experience a lack of family support and low self-esteem (Centre for Services and Information on Disability, 1999; Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 2001; Parnes et al., 2009; WHO/World Bank, 2011; Groce and Bakhshi, 2011). Those who acquire a disability later in life may find that their education, skills and work history count for little if they are unable to perform their previous job and if rehabilitation and retraining are unavailable. Furthermore, individuals who are already poor before becoming disabled have fewer resources or little “start-up” capital to enable them to take up another line of work. These factors, combined with social stigma and exclusion from family and community networks, often make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to locate and maintain employment in either the formal or the informal economy.

### ***Limited employment prospects***

While much of the data available on employment rates among people with disabilities have been framed by statistics from developed countries, in developing countries much of the labour force, including people with disabilities, engage in the informal economy. In such economies millions of people with disabilities lack the financial resources and the entrepreneurial skills needed to begin even the smallest of enterprises (Ingstad and Grut, 2007; Handicap International, 2006). In Zimbabwe, for example, less than 1 per cent of disabled people participate in the formal workforce (Disability Awareness in Action, 1995; Beresford, 1996). In Paraguay, 18.5 per cent of people with disabilities are employed in the formal workplace compared to 59.8 per cent of non-disabled people (DGEEC, 2002), and 29 per cent of disabled Chileans work in the formal economy compared to 57 per cent of non-disabled Chileans (INE Chile, 2000). Data collected by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found employment rates for disabled people of just over 40 per cent in the late 2000s, compared to 75 per cent of non-disabled people (OECD, 2010). Nor are these markedly lower levels of employment confined to low- and middle-income countries. The United States Department of Labor concluded that rates of employment among disabled people in the United States were about half of those for non-disabled people (Fremstad, 2009), with roughly 37 per cent of people with disabilities aged 21-64 employed, versus 78 per cent of non-disabled individuals within the same age range. In the United Kingdom it is estimated

that only 40-50 per cent of disabled people of working age are currently employed compared with 80 per cent of non-disabled people (The Poverty Site, 2011; Shaw Trust, 2011).

Nor are problems limited to the presence or absence of a job or self-employment. People with disabilities are generally the “last hired” and “first fired”, so in times of economic downturn, people with disabilities with formal jobs are often first to join the ranks of the unemployed, and those who are self-employed often find their ability to sell small items or provide unskilled services is severely curtailed (Barnes and Roulstone, 2005; Groce et al., 2011; Parnes et al., 2009). Even when able to keep their jobs or maintain themselves through self-employment, most of the positions they secure have little or no upward mobility, and thus people with disabilities are significantly less likely than non-disabled co-workers to be promoted or to get a raise.

Modified forms of begging are also common in a number of countries which have “protected” areas of work. Playing musical instruments or singing, for example, is a trade widely reported in the historic literature as being a speciality of blind people. In more modern times, the right to sell lottery tickets or newspapers is often allocated to people with visual impairments or physical disabilities. The practice of selling sign language alphabet cards by the Deaf, although looked down upon by fellow members of the Deaf community (Higgins, 1979; Buck, 2000) continues to be practiced in some countries. While such activities are often defined as “work” in many countries, the selling of lottery tickets and other small items is viewed widely by the public as an organized form of charity for people with disabilities (Higgins, 1979). Sale of such items is often combined with begging, as the amount of return for the disabled person on the sale of these items is often extremely limited (Buntan, 2005; The Nation, 2005).

### ***Social protection floors***

In countries with established social welfare systems and dedicated disability benefits for those who do not have paid work, or for those whose paid work does not cover all expenses, begging by people with disabilities appears to be far less common. (Grosh et al., 2008; Medeiros et al., 2006; Mitra, 2005; Mont, 2010). Ideally, such social welfare schemes should provide a safety net, allowing individuals with disabilities and their families to meet basic needs with dignity and choice. However, even in countries with social welfare schemes, benefits are often not sufficient to meet all needs of people with disabilities (Groce, 1984; Thurer, 1988). In some countries, eligibility restrictions and the complexity of application processes mean that many people with disabilities do not receive the benefits to which they are entitled. And in some countries, certain people with disabilities continue to beg even when funding is available and support systems work well, possibly because, as Thurer (1988) suggests, it allows them autonomy from the existing systems that place them in the position of dependents or objects of charity.

### ***Downward spiral of poverty***

Over time, an unemployed and impoverished disabled person’s situation may be further exacerbated by lack of basic housing, or lack of

access to food and clean water, health services and social support networks, creating a vicious cycle of poverty, ill-health and social marginalization (Parnes et al., 2009). The result is that people with disabilities are significantly over-represented among the poor and under-represented within national workforces (Braithwaite and Mont, 2008; Thomas, 2005; WHO/World Bank 2011). This is true of both developing and developed countries and of the formal and informal economies (Kassah, 2008; Ingstad and Grut, 2007; Handicap International, 2006).

In light of these challenges, the decision to trust to one's own efforts to earn a living by begging may be a rational economic decision, no matter what the social and psychological toll the individual incurs. Thus people with disabilities may turn to begging simply because they have no other options open to them or they may choose to beg given the limited range of options they face.

### **Organized begging, forced begging and intentional maiming**

Review of the literature also shows that begging for people with disabilities may not be simply an individual decision. Families may encourage members to beg, especially if they have some attribute, such as a visible disability, which would put them at an “advantage” over non-disabled beggars.

Organized groups of disabled beggars are found in some countries and these groups may represent unified social support mechanisms protection for beggars. In India, for example, “Beggar Brotherhoods” have been reported (Kumarappa, 2007). Organized begging among non-disabled individuals has also been reported in developed countries such as Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States (Swissinfo, 2009; Buck, 2000; Dean, 1999).

While groups may be formed by beggars, there are also frequent reports in the literature of people with disabilities and others being coerced into begging by “businessmen” or criminal gangs (often referred to as beggar mafias) who keep the profits. Many who beg under such circumstances exist in virtual slavery with the continual threat of mistreatment, violence or death. In such systems, people with disabilities are often seen as more profitable than non-disabled beggars because they evoke sympathy or pity (Walker, 2006; Saini, 2009; Malone, 2009). Indeed, it is widely reported in the folklore and popular culture of many countries that disabled children are routinely sold or stolen – usually from rural areas – to be used by criminals or gangs of beggars (Malone, 2009). Disabled children are especially vulnerable to being forced into this type of begging, although disabled adolescents and adults are also at great risk (Kumarappa, 2007; Datta, 2007; Ingstad and Grut, 2007; Kilbride et al., 2000; Sayem 2011; Ranga, 2009; Wonacott, 2004). The frequent mistreatment of disabled child beggars is so common in India that Malone (2009) reports that members of the public now refuse to give disabled child beggars any donations, knowing that it will only end up in the hands of their “handlers”.

The practice of maiming children in order to use them as beggars has been referenced in folklore for centuries. There is almost no documentation on this, however, and what does exist is largely anecdotal. The practice exists without a doubt, but its extent may differ significantly from one

country to the next, and the percentage of such individuals among all those people with disabilities who beg is as yet unknown. Bibars (1998), writing on street children in Egypt, identified two of the nine children whose case histories she gives as children intentionally maimed by relatives in order to enhance their ability to beg (a girl, partially blinded by her father at age 5; a boy “forced to lose both his legs” by an uncle at age 6). Malone (2009) reports a case of two doctors working in a government hospital in India who were said to have been paid US\$200 for each amputation they performed on a healthy child. Recent articles and newspaper accounts from India and Ethiopia also report non-disabled children being purposely maimed, either by having acid poured onto them, or by being physically maimed in order to increase the amount of money they can earn as beggars (Africa News, 2008; Malone, 2009; Demewozu, 2003). The practice of more severely injuring already disabled children and adults to make them capable of bringing in more money as beggars has also been documented in recent years (Wonacott, 2004; Groce, 2006; Africa News, 2008; Malone, 2009; Demewozu, 2003).

Whether intentionally disabled in order to beg, or disabled by other causes and then encouraged or forced to beg, disabled children and adults are often brought to the streets by people other than their families. A number of scattered reports have also documented the fact that children and adults with disabilities are often taught to beg (Centre for Services and Information on Disability, 1999). A training centre in Rohini’s Lal Quarters in Delhi, India was discovered to be run by a “beggar gang” who trained non-disabled children in the use of crutches and then forced them to pay 10-20 rupees in commission at the end of the day (Stone, 1984). Reports from Africa and India describe both disabled children and adults being taught to play music in order to evoke more sympathy, or to do stunts or tricks to amuse the crowd as they beg (Demewozu, 2003; Kumarappa, 2007; Datta, 2007). Mufti Imran, a researcher for Save the Children in Dkaha, writes that disabled child beggars are “taught different ways and nuances of begging such as the most appropriate place to beg, the kind of people one should approach, the kind of dialogues and mannerisms that would make everyone sympathize” (Ranga, 2009; Andrabi, 2009). Training people with disabilities to be more effective beggars is unfortunately nothing new. Kanner (1964) notes that blind boys were trained to beg in ancient Rome.

## **Literature on intervention**

Reflecting the scarcity of research, policy and programming concerning begging in general and disabled beggars in particular, there is limited discussion of how people with disabilities can be kept from having to resort to begging in the first place or what sustainable “routes out” can be called upon for people who are currently working as beggars (Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 2001). Attempts at criminalizing or arresting beggars have not proved particularly effective (Lynch, 2005; Rahman, 2009; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008). Such practices may simply encourage beggars to change location, rather than change their way of life (Lynch, 2005), or give them criminal records that make it harder still to find work. Simply removing beggars from the streets does not provide them with other means of survival, nor prevent them from returning to the streets (The Hindu, 2006; Burke, 1999).

In several countries, small-scale programmes for people with disabilities who currently work as beggars have been initiated. In the Gambia, for example, the government has set up a series of small income-generating projects, such as providing disabled beggars with phone cards to sell on the streets (The Gambia, 2009), and the Anirank Foundation in Nigeria has undertaken similar work (Ebimomi, 2008). Plans have been made in Hyderabad, India for the rehabilitation of all beggars, including disabled beggars, with NGOs designing projects to break the links between begging and poverty (Ranga, 2009), but the long-term sustainability and success of these programmes remains unclear. In Morocco, the government requires local authorities to establish centres for beggars, who participate in government-led rehabilitation programmes (Ali, 2009). A pilot programme was launched in Kaduna, Nigeria in April 2009 to help disabled people recognize their potential through vocational training (Haruna, 2009).

There is strikingly little information in the literature of examples in which employment schemes or income-generating programmes intended for the wider disabled population either were specifically directed towards – or indirectly reached – disabled beggars. And in this literature review, we were unable to find any examples in which employment programmes or poverty alleviation schemes intended for the general population were able to reach this population.

## **Disability and disabled beggars in Ethiopia**

The preceding review of the literature provides the backdrop for the study of begging by people with disabilities in Ethiopia. Importantly, over the past several decades disability advocacy has gained ground in Ethiopia, playing an instrumental part in improving laws, policies and programmes related to disability issues, and promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in development efforts.<sup>7</sup>

Statistics on disability in Ethiopia are hard to come by. The combination of poverty, war, famine and drought with limited preventative and rehabilitative services makes it likely that the prevalence of disability is high. Five million people are reported to live with a disability in Ethiopia (ILO, 2004b). However, plans for current and upcoming data collection on disability and development through government and NGOs such as the Ethiopian Centre on Disability and Development should allow a more precise understanding of the actual numbers involved. Of particular note, an unpublished study undertaken in 2010 by the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, focusing specifically on job preparation and experience, surveyed the education, job skills and employment status of 250 disabled beggars in Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, nd). This survey found that people with disabilities surveyed had a wider

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<sup>7</sup> In July 2010 the Ethiopian Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, 2006). The Convention is the latest in a series of significant pieces of legislation regarding disability, reflecting the government's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia includes significant legislation: Proclamation concerning the Rights to Employment for Persons with disabilities, No.568/2008; The Federal Civil Servant Proclamation No. 515/2007; Labour Proclamation, No. 377/2003; National Social Protection Policy, Final Draft, March 2012; National Plan of Action for Disability Inclusion 2010-2011; and Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) 2011-2015.

range of educational achievements than anticipated, including primary school completion and secondary school attendance for some, and job training for at least a small percentage of the individuals surveyed. Many had a history of employment in a variety of fields (as farmers, craftsmen or small traders), albeit the majority had a marginal job history of employment or self-employment outside the home. The results of this study are both interesting in themselves and will be revisited later in this report as they help to support findings from the present study.

In the interviews with government officials and members of civil society – as part of the current study as well as in the available literature – people with disabilities and their families were reported to face a considerable amount of stigma and prejudice. With 80 distinct ethnic and tribal traditions, there are a range of different attitudes, beliefs and practices towards people with disabilities in Ethiopia. However, in general, people with disabilities are widely believed to be disabled because they or their parents have committed a sin or they have angered God in some other manner. Additionally, many types of disabling conditions, for example epilepsy, are considered contagious.

People with disabilities are often viewed with pity and are seen as the objects of charity, rather than through an inclusive social or human rights lens. In both the literature and in interviews, examples of inclusion were noted. For example, the traditional role allocated to blind people as singers and musicians. In the Orthodox Church as well as in the Muslim tradition, religious texts are memorized and recited by scholars, a method of transmission which means that there were no barriers to blind men becoming famous religious scholars. However, singing, music and scholarship were roles open for only a small number of talented individuals. More widely, those who are disabled face significant barriers. They are far less likely to be integrated into the social, economic or political life of their communities, or to receive an education, marry, find work or participate in decision-making at either the household or community level (Teferra, 2005).

Moreover, there is little in the current social or political structure that provides economic support for disabled individuals in either the rural or urban settings. This means that people with disabilities must either be able to support themselves, live with family or others who can help support them, or else must turn to begging to make ends meet. Although a limited social security system (providing 10-15 birr per month)<sup>8</sup> was in place for a small number of individuals with disabilities two decades ago, this system has since crumbled as the country has gone through significant political changes as well as a series of natural and humanitarian disasters. A new system of social support is currently under discussion but has yet to be instituted.

A campaign was initiated in Addis Ababa in 2010 to discourage people from walking or crawling into the streets to beg – a practice that is both physically dangerous and that exacerbates the existing problem of highly congested traffic in urban areas. While hailed widely as an effort that will keep beggars “off the streets”, in fact the effort was intended not to end begging, but rather to improve urban traffic problems. Within weeks of the campaign’s introduction, beggars were returning to the streets and sidewalks.

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<sup>8</sup> Equivalent to US\$0.59 to US\$0.86 at the time of the survey.



New legislation, a growing number of programmes that address health and development needs of people with disabilities and a burgeoning disability rights movement have begun to reach many Ethiopians with disabilities. Changes in policy and programming have led to changes in attitudes among the general population as well. As one blind leader of the Ethiopian Disability Rights Movement said, “When I used to walk into a room, you could hear people ‘sucking their teeth’ (a traditional expression of sympathy and pity). Now I hear that much less”. Yet, while such progress is encouraging, these advances seem to have made little impact on the lives of people who work as beggars. The following chapters address a number of vital questions, such as: why are disabled beggars so difficult to reach? What makes them turn to begging in the first place and what keeps them there? What are their daily lives like? Do they feel they have a future beyond begging? If so, what do they think this future looks like?

This study is among the first to try to get more detailed information about this population and we believe our findings are both interesting and, in many cases, unanticipated.

## Chapter 3: Beggars with disabilities in Addis Ababa – preliminary profile

This chapter presents the study findings drawn from: data from individual interviews (24 interviewees); the focus groups discussions (2 male, 2 female, 2 mixed involving 42 participants – 10-12 per group); and the survey data (100 participants). The questions asked fall into four categories:

- Individual demographic information.
- Information on daily routines and living conditions.
- Data on future plans.
- How these plans may be informed by knowledge of disability rights and support from local DPOs, NGOs and mainstream international development efforts.

The findings are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

### Section 1: Demographic information

In this section, the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents are described, and an overview is given of how they acquired their disabilities, their place of origin, their reasons for moving to Addis Ababa (if not originally from the city) as well as their education and vocational training levels and work history.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Sex distribution*

In planning the study, it was hoped to have an equal balance of men and women in the exploratory interviews, focus groups and survey itself. In carrying out the survey, however, males were found to outnumber females at all survey sites, with 61 per cent of the final total being male and 39 per cent female. These findings are consistent with the findings from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs survey (Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, unpublished). Further research would be needed to confirm whether this reflects the actual breakdown of male and female disabled beggars or whether it is simply a reflection of the group present on the days when the survey was carried out.

#### *Age distribution*

This survey specifically targeted adults with disabilities (aged 18 and over). Of those interviewed, 8 per cent were aged between 18 and 25; two-thirds (63 per cent) fell into the 26–45 age group; 14 per cent were aged between 46 and 55 years; 12 per cent were aged between 56 and 60 years; and 3 per cent over age 60.

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<sup>9</sup> In order to limit the length of this report, tables for survey questions will be provided where they add to the discussion, but the results of some tables will be summarized for the benefit of the reader.

### **Type of disability**

In the sample of beggars approached at random on the streets for both the exploratory interviews and survey, people with physical disabilities predominated. In the survey itself 40 per cent of respondents were physically disabled, followed by individuals with vision impairments, who formed slightly over a quarter (28 per cent) of respondents. A further 12 per cent said that they had “multiple disabilities” of which a physical impairment or a vision problem was one of the disabilities involved. Individuals with leprosy or “ex-leprosy” (people who now receive medication) comprised 13 per cent of those surveyed and form a distinct group. One person surveyed reported a hearing problem and another identified himself as being intellectually disabled. Individuals with mental health impairments were more difficult to identify, and it is possible that some individuals who appeared to be non-disabled beggars may have mental health disabilities. Only two individuals surveyed identified themselves as having a mental health impairment in addition to having another disability.<sup>10</sup> A further 2 per cent said that they had epilepsy, and one person claimed to have “another form” of disability.

Men in the survey were more likely than women to have physical disabilities (44.3 per cent versus 33.3 per cent) or to be blind (60.7 per cent versus 39.3 per cent); and while 5.1 per cent of women stated their disability was epilepsy, no men reported having epilepsy.

**Table 1: Survey participants by type of disability and sex (%) N=100**

Type of disability	Sex	
	Male	Female
Physical disability/difficulty moving	44.3	33.3
Blind/difficulty seeing	27.9	28.2
Deaf/difficulty hearing	0	2.6
Intellectually disability	0	2.6
Mental illness	3.3	0
Ex-leprosy/leprosy	9.8	17.9
Epilepsy	0	5.1
Multiple disabilities	13.1	10.3
Other	1.6	0
Total	100	100

### **Cause of disability**

Over two-thirds of survey respondents reported that they had become disabled through an accident (37 per cent) or an illness (35 per cent). One in ten had been born with a disability,<sup>11</sup> and a further one in ten had been

<sup>10</sup> Future research should make specific efforts to identify whether people with mental health impairments are simply harder to identify or do not constitute a significant group within the broader population of people who beg in Ethiopia.

<sup>11</sup> There is a discrepancy in responses: in Question A5, 10 per cent reported being “born with a disability” as the reason for this disability; to Question A6, 12 per cent responded to the question “When did you become disabled?” by stating that they had been “born with a disability”.

injured while in the military. Other causes, including non-military related violence, were indicated by 8 per cent.

While survey respondents were not asked about the type of accident or illness that had brought about their disability, this information was obtained from individuals in the exploratory interviews and from the focus group participants. The overwhelming majority of individuals who had become disabled through accident described sustaining injuries to the legs, arms or spine while working in construction or while doing manual labour, such as carrying heavy sacks or lifting oversized objects. Two individuals reported being disabled after being hit by motor vehicles. When it came to illness, many did not have an exact diagnosis. For example, a number of respondents said “I became ill”, “I had a high fever” or in the case of one man, “I fell asleep and it rained. When I woke up, I couldn’t move.”

### ***Onset of disability***

The age at which a person becomes disabled has significant implications in terms of access to education, job training, marriage and social inclusion. Of those surveyed, 12 per cent reported being born with a disability<sup>12</sup> and 41 per cent reported becoming disabled before school age (which is age 10-12 in many parts of Ethiopia, especially in rural areas). Thus, over half of the beggars surveyed were disabled prior to school age. An additional 8 per cent reported becoming disabled while in primary school. In total, 61 per cent of all those surveyed were disabled at or before reaching adolescence. Over a third (38 per cent) reported they had become disabled as an adult.

Only one person surveyed reported having become disabled in old age, despite the fact that 29 per cent of the sample were aged 45 or above, and 15 per cent were aged 55 or above. While a number of frail, elderly people were observed begging during the field visits, those who self-identify as disabled appear to distinguish disability from the disabling consequences of old age.

### ***Marital status***

In the preliminary interviews and focus group discussions, the majority reported being either married or “not married but living with partner”. Results from the survey were similar, with almost half of respondents (49 per cent) reporting being married and an additional 16 per cent stating they were cohabiting. Almost one in five respondents (17 per cent) were single, and a further 16 per cent divorced or separated, while 2 per cent were widowed.

There were some marked sexual differences in marital status. Men were more likely than women to be married (52.5 per cent versus 43.6 per cent), as well as to be divorced or separated (18.1 per cent versus 12.9 per cent). Proportionately more women (25.6 per cent) than men (9.8 per cent) said that they were cohabiting, reflecting a common pattern of disabled women living in less secure relationships (WHO/UNFPA, 2009). Relatively more men (19.7 per cent) than women (12.8 per cent) reported being single.

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<sup>12</sup> See footnote 9.

Again, these tendencies need to be investigated in greater depth with a larger sample.

### **Children**

Significantly, over two-thirds of survey respondents (71 per cent) reported having children. These findings are in line with a growing number of studies that are finding that disabled adults, whether married or not, tend to have children at rates similar to that of the rest of the population (WHO/UNFPA, 2009). While 19 per cent reported having one child, a significant percentage (41 per cent) had 2-3 children,<sup>13</sup> 7 per cent had 4-6 children and 4 per cent reported having families of six or more children. 42 per cent of respondents who had children said that their children lived with them, while almost half of these respondents (47.8 per cent) said that their children lived with other family members or not in the same household. One in ten reported they had grown children who now live on their own.

### **Education**

Of those surveyed, two-thirds (67 per cent) reported they had had no formal schooling. Some 45 per cent of all respondents stated they could not read or write and 22 per cent had attained at least marginal literacy outside of formal education. Some 17 per cent completed or at least had some primary education and 9 per cent had completed at least some secondary education. Finally, 7 per cent had had some education through religious schools and presumably were literate, as literacy is routinely part of religious education.

There was a significant difference between males and females in terms of education: 82.1 per cent of the disabled women beggars interviewed had had no formal schooling, compared to 57.3 per cent of the disabled men. In particular, women were far more likely than men (66.7 per cent versus 31.1 per cent) to be illiterate. Some 19.7 per cent of men and 12.8 per cent of women stated that they had completed or attended some primary school. Additionally, 11.5 per cent of the men surveyed versus 5.1 per cent of women had completed or attended at least “some secondary school”. Finally, 11.5 per cent of men stated they went to religious schools, but no women did so.

**Table 2: Survey respondents by level of education and sex (%)**  
(N=100: 61 males and 39 females)

Level of education	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
No formal schooling, cannot read/write	31.1	66.7	45
No formal schooling, but can read/write	26.2	15.4	22
Completed (or at least some) primary school	19.7	12.8	17
Completed (or at least some) secondary school	11.5	5.1	9
Other (religious, etc.)	11.5	0	7
Total	100	100	100

<sup>13</sup> There are some inconsistencies in the data, since information derived from another question highlighted that 72 per cent of those surveyed declared that they have children.

Cross-tabulating education level with the stage at which the individuals became disabled, an interesting pattern emerged: the vast majority (91.7 per cent) of those born with a disability had no formal schooling, compared to two-thirds (68.3 per cent) of those disabled before school age, 50 per cent of those who became disabled while of primary school age and 61 per cent of those who acquired a disability while of secondary school age or older. This is in line with what might be expected from the literature, since expectations about the future prospects of those disabled from birth or an early age would already have been lowered. Commensurate with these findings, the literacy rates of those born with a disability and those disabled early in childhood were significantly lower than those who acquired a disability later in life, which highlights a need to target early childhood inclusive education efforts.

**Table 3: Level of education by stage of disability onset (%) N=100**

Level of education	Onset of disability				
	Birth	Before school age	Primary school age	Secondary school age and above	Total
No formal schooling, cannot read/write	75.0	48.8	37.5	33.3	45
No formal schooling, but can read/write	16.7	19.5	12.5	28.2	22
Completed (or at least some) primary school	0	17.1	12.5	23.1	17
Completed (or at least some) secondary school	8.3	4.9	25.0	10.3	9
Other (religious, etc.)	0	9.8	12.5	5.1	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	12	41	8	38	100

### Reason for leaving school

As noted above, a third of survey respondents had received some formal education. The main reason cited for leaving school by these people was that they could not afford to continue (11 respondents). Some six participants said that they left upon completion of their course. Another two respondents said that the school was inaccessible to them once they became disabled, and one noted specifically that there was no accessible transportation to reach the school. Another respondent dropped out after being bullied by other children. Some nine participants stated that they left for other reasons and the remaining three did not indicate any reason. In the preliminary interviews and focus group, a number of people stated that their labour was needed at home to contribute to household income, which may have been a further influence on the decision to leave school.

### Decision to leave school

Those 24 who attended at least some level of formal education but reported leaving before completing the course were asked who decided that their education should end. Most (17 respondents; 70.8 per cent) reported that they decided to end their education themselves, 4 respondents (16.7 per cent) said that their parents or “others” decided they should leave school – or

at least did not encourage them to stay – and three respondents (12.5 per cent) did not answer the question.

### ***Vocational training/skills building***

One assumption raised repeatedly in the literature is that people with disabilities turn to begging because they have little or no prior job training or work experience. Informants were asked whether they had received prior job training or apprenticeships. A small number of the preliminary interviewees, as well as several participants in each of the focus groups, stated that they had had some job training. Results from the survey also reflected this – while 68 per cent had no training or apprenticeship history, a third (32 per cent) did have some prior training or apprentice experience to prepare them for the workforce. Men surveyed were more likely than women to have received training (36.1 per cent versus 25.6 per cent), but as stated earlier, sex differences in distribution need to be tested on a larger sample size.

Among those who received training, the most common skills training mentioned was sewing-related (14 respondents), followed by business skills (seven respondents) and training in trade skills beyond that of day labourer (i.e. electrician, welder, carpenter – five respondents). One respondent reported having trained as a secretary, and another four respondents received training in “other” fields. Finally, one respondent reported receiving training but did not indicate the field.

Interestingly, no strong links were found in the analysis between training status and stage of life at which disability occurred. One quarter of those who had a disability from birth and 34.1 per cent of those disabled before school age had received some skills training. Similarly, 25 per cent of those disabled during primary school age and 33.3 per cent of those disabled as youths or adults had received some training. This is an intriguing finding, given the low rate of education reported for this group overall; that between a quarter and a third of the people with disabilities interviewed now working as beggars had received some type of job training over the years. Further research is needed to clarify and verify this finding.

**Table 4: Stage of disability onset by training status (%) N=100**

Stage of disability onset	Training status		Total
	No	Yes	
From birth	75.0	25.0	100
Before school age	65.9	34.1	100
During primary school	75.0	25.0	100
As youth or adult	66.7	33.3	100
Total	68	32	100

There were differences in the type of training received, however, reflecting the stage at which these individuals had become disabled. Those who acquired their disability at birth or in childhood (including during primary school) were more likely to have learned sewing-related skills (including carpet-making and embroidery) than those who became disabled as an adult, who had mainly learned building-related skills. Those who

acquired a disability as adults were slightly more likely to have learned a trade or business skill.

Thus, while the majority of all those interviewed had no skills training, a significant minority had received at least some preparation for the workforce. This is of note as it is commonly assumed that people with disabilities who beg do so because they lack viable alternatives. It is also of note because the individuals disabled prior to adulthood who had received such training are currently begging rather than employed on the basis of the training/skills they had acquired. It is possible that the training they received did not prepare them adequately for the job market. It is also possible that, as is the case in many training situations, job placement, an important complement to the acquisition of skills, was not successfully accomplished or that the individuals were left to find employment on their own. It is also possible that a combination of factors is at play – this finding certainly warrants further investigation.

### ***Place of birth***

A key question in this study was whether people with disabilities were from Addis Ababa itself or whether they had come to the city from the surrounding towns, villages and rural areas. Thus, in both qualitative and quantitative components of this study a series of questions were asked regarding where people came from, when and why they had come to Addis Ababa, and what their expectations were in coming.

In the preliminary interviews and focus groups, none of the participants reported coming from Addis Ababa itself. The survey found a comparable pattern, with only 6 per cent reporting that they had been born in Addis Ababa.<sup>14</sup> One in ten came from a town or rural community within 100 kilometres (62 miles) of Addis Ababa. The majority, 84 per cent, reported coming from a town, village or rural area further away than 100 kilometres.

### ***Reason for coming to the city***

The majority of beggars surveyed (96 per cent) came from outside Addis Ababa.<sup>15</sup> Half of these respondents said they came to the city to seek medical care or a cure for their impairment (48 per cent). Approximately a quarter came to the city to seek work after they became disabled, as they could not find work at home (22 per cent). Other reasons cited were: to attend a school or programme for disabled children (6 per cent); because their family told them to leave due to their disability (6 per cent); or because of conflict or famine at home (3 per cent). Some 4 per cent had come to Addis Ababa before becoming disabled, while a further 4 per cent came with their families as a child or youth.

It should be noted, based on the interview and focus group data, that a number of people reported more than one reason for coming to Addis Ababa. For example, many disabled informants reported that they decided to come

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<sup>14</sup> There is a discrepancy in responses: to one question 6 per cent reported being born in the city; while to another, 96 per cent responded (instead of the expected 94 per cent) to the question “Why did you come to the city?”

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 13, for the discrepancy in the number in the previous section.



to Addis Ababa because they could find no work at home. In addition, they felt – and were regularly told – that they were draining resources from their families without making a contribution. A number further noted that they had hoped that once in Addis Ababa, they might be able to find some medical care or even a cure that would make their lives better.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Livelihood before starting to beg***

Previous work history was examined through a set of questions about how respondents earned a living before they became beggars and, if they had worked before starting to beg, what had made them leave that job.

Of those surveyed, 59 per cent reported no previous employment history outside the home and had lived on “family support”. A number of those interviewed reported that they had lived with their parents until some incident – usually the death of one or both parents – left them with no choice but to leave home. Some had come to Addis Ababa directly from a rural homestead, whereas others had first moved to a nearby town or village and then headed to Addis Ababa when they were unable to earn a living.

Overall, 41 per cent of those surveyed had some work history before turning to the streets. Of those surveyed, 12 per cent reported working in agriculture, a pattern that had also been reported in the interviews and focus groups – “I used to herd cattle” said one man. Another woman reported that she “used to grow corn, raise chickens and sell eggs”. Some 8 per cent had worked in the military prior to becoming disabled. An additional 6 per cent worked in business or sales. Manual labour had employed 3 per cent of those surveyed. Finally, 12 per cent indicated “other” work experience.

Men interviewed were more likely than women to have had previous work history (51.8 per cent, compared to 23.6 per cent). Additionally, proportionately twice as many men as women (14.8 per cent versus 7.7 per cent) reported having worked in agriculture/farm work.

**Table 5: Work history by sex (%) N=100**

Work history	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
No work history	49.2	74.4	59
Agriculture or farm work	14.8	7.7	12
Business or selling or trading	6.6	5.1	6
Manual work	1.6	5.1	3
Military	11.5	2.6	8
Other	16.4	5.1	12
Total <sup>17</sup>	100	100	100

<sup>16</sup> In future surveys, the survey tool will be amended to ensure that those interviewed can give as many answers as are applicable to this question.

<sup>17</sup> “No work history” includes also family support; “Manual work” includes factory work, day labourer and the service sector; “Other” includes also government employment. No one indicated “Building/construction” or “Housework”.

Interestingly, there was an incongruity between the findings from the survey and the findings from individual interviews and focus group discussions. The survey found no one who reported working as a “construction worker” and only one who said he had worked as a day labourer prior to becoming disabled. However, in both interviews and focus groups, approximately 10 per cent of those who discussed their histories had worked either in construction or in day labour prior to becoming disabled, and these individuals all reported that their disabilities were the result of accidents while on the job.

Of those 41 surveyed who reported previous work histories, 17 respondents (41.5 per cent) found themselves unemployed after becoming disabled and five (12.2 per cent) reported specifically that they could not continue the job they had because of their disability.<sup>18</sup> An additional six people (14.6 per cent) left their jobs to come to Addis Ababa to seek medical care for their disabling condition, and two people (4.9 per cent) became unemployed when the job ended and no other work could be found. Only one person (2.4 per cent) stated he had voluntarily left previous employment and one reported he had “quit to find a better job” (2.5 per cent). Ten people did not specify the reason for leaving their previous work.

## **Section 2: Life as a beggar**

The second focus of the survey was to explore what life is like on a daily basis for people with disabilities who beg. Respondents were asked how long they had worked as beggars, why they chose to beg, how much they are able to collect as beggars and what the rhythm of their daily lives is like. Survey respondents were also asked a series of questions about their daily routines – how they planned their days, how they went about asking people for money or food, how they interacted with the general public and with each other. Questions relating to treatment by the police and authorities and whether they encountered violence or abuse were also included. It is of note that all who were interviewed had well-developed strategies for surviving and making their living in an extremely difficult and physically inaccessible environment.

### ***Duration of work as a beggar***

Most survey respondents had begged for a considerable period of time. A majority of 80 per cent had begged for five years or more, of whom around a quarter had done so for over 20 years (19 per cent). Another 13 per cent had begged for between two and four years, and 5 per cent had begged for between one and two years, while only 2 per cent were new to the streets, having begged for under one year.

Well over half of those disabled from birth (66.7 per cent) or from primary school age (55.1 per cent) had been begging for over ten years, compared to 33 per cent of those disabled as adults. This reflects both age and duration of disability, but also highlights the need to provide additional educational and vocational support for people born with a disability or disabled early in life.

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<sup>18</sup> Whether this was because they were physically unable to continue or because they were laid off after becoming disabled is unclear and warrants the addition of a follow up question in the revised survey tool.

**Table 6: Duration of begging by stage of disability onset (%) N=100**

Duration of begging	Stage of disability onset			Overall
	Birth	Before school age/ primary school age	As youth or adult	
Under 1 year	0	4.1	0	2
1-2 years	8.3	4.1	5.1	5
2-4 years	8.3	12.2	15.4	13
5-10 years	16.7	24.5	46.2	32
10-20 years	50.0	28.6	23.1	29
Over 20 years	16.7	26.5	10.3	19
Total	100	100	100	100

***Reason for starting to beg***

Respondents were asked why they began to beg and were allowed to give as many responses as they thought relevant. Three-quarters (75 per cent) reported they could find no other work after becoming disabled, while 24 per cent reported they had been born with a disability and could not find another job. One in five (18 per cent) also stated that other types of work were “too physically demanding”. Only 2 per cent reported that other types of work “did not pay enough” and 4 per cent cited other reasons.<sup>19</sup>

***Income from begging***

Disabled beggars surveyed were asked several questions about their income from begging – what they collected by begging on an average day and in an average month, as well as what a “good day” and a “bad day” yielded.

***Average daily amount collected***

Over half of those interviewed in the survey (53 per cent) collected between 10 and 20 birr a day, or the equivalent of between US\$0.59 and US\$1.18, with a further 19 per cent collecting less than 10 birr a day.<sup>20</sup> Thus, almost three-quarters of the survey respondents were surviving below the poverty line of US\$1.25 per day – the equivalent of 21.25 birr, with some falling very much under this line. Some 19 per cent collected between 20 and 30 birr, and a small number (4 per cent) reported collecting between 30 and 40 birr. Five per cent could not indicate the amount of money collected.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence the sum of the percentages is not 100.

<sup>20</sup> US\$1.00 = 17 Ethiopian birr; 10 Ethiopian birr = US\$0.59.

<sup>21</sup> The question of whether anyone earned above 40 birr (US\$2.35) a day was not asked in this survey, but in the revised survey tool, the possibility of responding to a higher category (the equivalent of >40 birr) will be included to ensure that this information is captured if it exists.

**Table 7: Amount collected on an average, a bad and a good day (%)**  
**N=100**

<b>Amount collected</b>	<b>Average day</b>	<b>Unusually good day</b>	<b>Unusually bad day</b>
Under 10 birr	19	0	91
10-15 birr	31	18	6
15-20 birr	22	20	1
20-30 birr	19	47	1
30 birr or more	4	15	1
Do not know	5	0	0
Total	100	100	100

Even on an exceptionally good day, over one third of respondents (38 per cent) collected less than the global poverty line of 21.25 birr; almost half (47 per cent) collected between 20 and 30 birr (at or slightly above the poverty line), while 15 per cent collected 30 birr or more.

On a bad day, when it is rainy or cold, when there are no ceremonies or events to bring crowds to the churches or public gathering places or when one was just unlucky or overlooked in the crowd of beggars, then amounts collected are limited indeed. On a bad day, over three-quarters (78 per cent) of those surveyed reported collecting five birr or less and an additional 13 per cent collecting between five and ten birr. In all, 91 per cent report collecting less than 10 birr on a bad day, with a number of those interviewed volunteering that on a “very bad day” they collected nothing at all. On days like this, only 2 per cent said they collected amounts that brought them over the poverty line.

### **Covering daily expenses**

Respondents were asked whether they were able to collect enough money to “cover their daily expenses”. “Daily expenses” were not defined because the intention was to identify whether respondents felt they were able to meet their daily expenses, no matter what these were. The nature of their expenses is explored in the section on Living Conditions and Material Assets (page 34).

Approximately one in ten survey respondents (12 per cent) said that they collected enough to cover their expenses most days and have a bit left over, while a further 11 per cent reported being able to meet daily expenses most days, but usually having nothing left over. A third (33 per cent) said they were not able to pay for daily expenses “some days” and a further third said they were not able to meet all daily expenses “most days”. Some 11 per cent report they are never able to pay for all daily expenses. Overall, the majority of those surveyed (77 per cent) were not always able to meet what they felt to be their daily expenses.

Women were more likely than men to report that they are not able to pay for expenses “most days” or they are never able to pay for all expenses (53.9 per cent versus 37.7 per cent), which may reflect lower amounts collected and/or greater obligations because of dependent children.

### **Coping, on a bad day**

When asked what they went without, should they have a bad day or a period where they collect significantly less, three-quarters of respondents (74 per cent) reported they ate less or went without food entirely. One in ten (11 per cent) said that on a bad day, they would cope by walking rather than taking a bus or paying for a ride to the location where they were begging that day. Some 7 per cent also stated they go without a place to sleep – indicating that at least some individuals pay rent on a daily or weekly basis, and lack stability in housing.

A further 7 per cent said they would borrow money from someone to tide them over, which raises the further concern that these people may be regularly or continually in debt. Only 1 per cent indicated “other options”.

### **Frequency of meals**

The tendency of the disabled beggars to go without food as a coping strategy is also reflected in answers to the question on food security. A quarter (24 per cent) said they did not eat regularly “most days”, while an additional 28 per cent reported they usually ate only once a day. Moreover, the quality of food available to them may be limited. “When I have a bad day,” one blind woman said, “I’ll eat a bit of bread and then have some tea.” An additional 45 per cent reported eating twice a day. Only 3 per cent said they eat three times a day, despite the fact that 3 meals a day are routine in urban Addis Ababa.

### **Use of extra money**

Survey respondents were asked how they spend money if they find themselves with extra money on a good day. Over half of respondents (54 per cent) said they would save the money “for later”. In the preliminary interviews, informants defined “saving it for later” as keeping money on their persons or at home for spending at a future date. Of the remainder, 18 per cent reported buying something immediate that they feel like or want, 16 per cent reported buying basic necessities such as food or clothing, 10 per cent said they “never had extra money” and 2 per cent said they would buy alcohol.

### **Non-cash donations**

Not all transactions are monetary. While those interviewed reported they much prefer cash, traditionally, beggars are often given bread (injira), old clothes or other items that people no longer have use for. The majority of respondents said that they regularly have received clothing (50 per cent), food (71 per cent) or other items (5 per cent), or a place to stay for the night (1 per cent). Only one in five (18 per cent) said that they just received cash.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence the sum of the percentages is greater than 100.

### ***Earnings from other activities***

The vast majority of those interviewed (81 per cent) survived solely on what they collected through begging. One in five (19 per cent) reported supplementing their incomes with other small jobs when they could, with some working more than one job.<sup>23</sup> The most frequent source reported (12 participants; 63.2 per cent of those with additional jobs) was selling lottery tickets on a part-time basis. Of those who reported working “other jobs”, three participants (15.8 per cent) reported that they “watched cars” or “kept an eye on stores” for owners, getting a few coins in return. The same number (three participants; 15.8 per cent) sell “small items” such as phone cards or food and a number reported they sold both lottery tickets and small items. One man worked as a musician, singing to amuse crowds near churches, and several who lived near a church that attracted pilgrims from throughout the region reported that to make some extra money, they would rent out the bed in which they slept to pilgrims when they could, sleeping on the floor instead themselves. Several reported there was also a practice when someone received bread (injira) instead of coins, to divide up the donated injira and re-sell it to other beggars for a snack or lunch.

### **Proportion of income from extra jobs**

None of the 19 people who did “extra jobs” brought in much money. Almost two-thirds (12 people; 63.2 per cent) of those who did such jobs report they earn “only a little bit” extra though these efforts, while six others (31.6 per cent) estimated that such extra work brought in about a quarter of their monthly income. Only one person – the musician – reported that he made “about half” his income through singing. While this individual viewed his musical efforts as a separate job, in fact, he sang while begging so it is unclear whether those giving him money actually saw this as “work” or only as part of a tradition of singing blind beggars that is common in Ethiopia.

### **Decisions about expenditure**

For people with disabilities, monetary concerns are not restricted to how much they collect, but also whether they have the right to decide how that money is spent. The majority of respondents (79 per cent) reported that they themselves decide where their money goes; with one in five (21 per cent) reporting that others – family (15 per cent), housemates (3 per cent) or someone else (3 per cent) – take charge of the money they bring in.

### ***Preference for extra jobs or begging***

The 19 individuals who earned additional money through other sources were asked whether they preferred this to begging. Only four respondents (21.1 per cent) said that they preferred earning even a small amount of money through another source to begging. This is in line with interviews and focus groups, where a number of individuals who earned extra money through selling small items or lottery tickets said they found these extra sources of income highly unreliable and often did not pay for their time or initial investment. An important point that will be returned to in Chapter 4 is

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<sup>23</sup> There is a discrepancy in responses: in answer to one question, 87 per cent stated they do not have other work activities, while when asked which kind of other job activities they do, this decreased to 81 per cent.

that these people clearly stated that they did not prefer begging, but rather that the current alternatives to begging (such as selling lottery tickets) offered an irregular source of income and they would need a more consistent alternative source if they were to substitute this for begging.

### ***Attempts to stop begging***

Finally, an effort was made to determine if the individuals interviewed used begging as a “fall back” strategy when they could not find work elsewhere or whether begging was viewed by them as the only option.

In both the preliminary interviews and focus groups, a number of informants were clear that for them, begging was “the only choice I have”. The survey echoed these findings. Three-quarters of those interviewed (74 per cent) said that once they began to beg, they had continued to do so because they could not find anything that provided enough of a regular income to allow them to give up begging. Only two people stated they “like to beg/this is the best job for me”. Of particular note, 18 per cent of those surveyed reported regularly spending some money on “education or finding another job”.

### ***Savings and longer-term financial planning***

In preliminary interviews and focus groups, no one reported having a bank account and thus this question was not included in the survey. However, a number of informants did use two other investment strategies. One was a revolving credit scheme called an “Equib” system into which people pay a minimal amount each week and the other was a burial society account.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Equib accounts**

Many of the disabled beggars surveyed make regular contributions to an “Equib account”, a pot of money that becomes available to each of the participants on a rotating basis; that participant uses the money to pay for larger purchases that he or she would otherwise not have the cash outlay to cover. In the survey 42 per cent of respondents said that they had an Equib account. Most (26 people; 61.9 per cent) pay a minimal amount (5-10 birr) into such accounts on a weekly basis, reflecting the low daily and monthly incomes reported above. A third (35.7 per cent) paid higher amounts than this into Equib accounts – 10 to 20 birr – but in a few cases, over 30 birr. One respondent did not specify the amount of money paid. Men and women reported investing in Equib accounts at comparable rates.

Respondents reported that when it was their turn they could call upon 800 to 1,000 birr (US\$45.40 to US\$56.77) to pay for items such as school fees, school uniforms and clothing for their children, or a household item such as a radio or second-hand television.

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<sup>24</sup> Informants were not asked whether they have both an Equib account and burial society account, but in future research, this question should be added to the survey tool.

## **Burial societies**

In addition to the Equib accounts, over half of survey respondents (53 per cent) belonged to “burial societies” that, in addition to funding funerals, also allow participants to borrow against their accounts in emergencies. Thus such societies help people with disabilities guarantee that their families will not be further impoverished when they die, but it is also a way to plan for emergencies.

While more people belonged to the less expensive burial society than had an Equib account, almost three quarters (73 per cent) of those who did have an Equib account also belonged to a burial society. Of these, most (64 per cent) were able to contribute only a minimal 5-10 birr a week to each account. But it is of note that, despite their poverty, a number of those surveyed were attempting to manage their money in some way that allowed a cushion for larger expenses and emergency situations.

## ***Strategies for begging***

### **Begging sites**

When asked where they choose to beg, most reported they begged in not one but several places, varying the places based on whether there is a religious festival, a holiday or public event (such as a political rally or sports match), which would bring crowds to certain areas. Having said this, a number also stated that because of their disability, they were unable to travel easily from one site to another to beg and were therefore less able to compete with non-disabled beggars who can be much more mobile.

In the survey, over two-thirds of respondents (69 per cent) reported that they usually beg near churches or mosques, although almost all combined these with “other places” – near office buildings, market areas, hotels, restaurants or stadiums, as well as in the street and in traffic circles. Respondents said they preferred places of business (29 per cent), markets (31 per cent) or entertainment (18 per cent), despite the recent policy that was intended to improve the flow of traffic and, by implication, keep beggars out of traffic by threatening those who beg on sidewalks or directly in the streets with arrest.<sup>25</sup>

In the preliminary interviews and focus groups, there was a clear consensus that, if at all possible, people preferred to beg far from where they lived, where neighbours would be less likely to see them. Begging nearer home was done only if the informants had significant mobility problems or if they were blind and had no one to help them to a site further away. Survey results also reflected this, but not as clearly, with 43 per cent of respondents saying they “always” begged far from where they live, 16 per cent saying that they begged “near” where they lived in their own neighbourhoods, and 41 per cent saying they did both.

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<sup>25</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence, the sum of the percentages is not 100.



**Table 8: Begging place (proximity to home) by potential mobility problems (%)**

Begging place (proximity to home)	Type of disability		
	Physical disability/ difficulty in moving	Blind/difficulty seeing	Multiple disabilities
Near where I live	12.5	14.3	16.7
Far from where I live	50.0	57.1	16.7
Both	37.5	28.6	66.7
Total	100	100	100

### Reason for choice of location

When asked how they decided where to beg, by far the most common reason, given by two-thirds of the respondents (66 per cent), was that people would be “more likely to give” at that location. Some 20 per cent said that their decision was based primarily on where they consider it safe to beg. An additional 13 per cent also based their decision on the likelihood that they would not be chased away. This was a regular consideration, with only one person saying that they were not bothered by the police.

Almost three-quarters of those surveyed (72 per cent) said that they themselves decided where to beg, while the remaining respondents (28 per cent) said that the decision of where to beg is at least in part determined by others, and that the decision was dependent on established territories or locations of other beggars. One third (nine respondents; 32.1 per cent) reported that other beggars “have their own territory” and that they are chased away if they try to beg in another beggar’s spot. The same number reported that police or other authorities restrict places where beggars can work, keeping beggars away from major government buildings, upscale shopping areas and major tourist spots, as well as out of crowded streets during rush hour.<sup>26</sup> Only one respondent (3.6 per cent) stated that a gangster or “businessman” decided the place for begging but provided no additional information on this. Finally, nine people chose the option “other reasons” for where they worked.

### Begging with children

Among the 72 respondents who said they had children,<sup>27</sup> just ten (13.9 per cent) reported ever having had their children help them beg; of the 29 respondents whose children live with them, eight (27.6 per cent) reported that their children help them beg.

Significantly, of those ten who reported that their children “help them beg”, none had their children helping them full-time – eight reported that their children helped them “sometimes” and only two allowed their children to regularly help them after school or during school vacation. Interestingly,

<sup>26</sup> Although the survey did not ask (F5) whether owners of commercial buildings or homeowners also chased respondents away, this did come up in interviews. Presumably some of this was caught in the response to whether police or other authorities restricted places to beg, but some of this may have been missed and another choice (shop/homeowners) – should be included in the revised survey.

<sup>27</sup> See paragraph on “Children” in Section 1.

in the focus groups as well as during the survey itself, it was noted that several disabled women had infants or toddlers with them; however, none of these women reported these preschool-aged children as “helping them” beg, although having an infant or toddler in tow is often cited by members of the general public as a way that beggars can collect more money.

Of the 64 respondents to the survey who had school-aged children either living with them or living with relatives, 36 (56.3 per cent) of these reported that their children were in school. Another five (7.8 per cent) said their children were out of school and working. Ten (15.6 per cent) reported that their children are involved in “other” activities and, finally, 12 (18.8 per cent) did not answer. In the focus groups, emphasis was placed by all informants on the importance of education for their children, and there were extended discussions about the obligations parents have to make sure their children receive a good education. Only one respondent said her child was also a beggar and worked on his or her own (it was assumed that this was a grown child, but the child’s age was not asked).

**Poverty – living conditions and material assets**

A series of questions was next asked to determine living conditions and material assets as one component of poverty at the household level.

**Living conditions**

The vast majority (90 per cent) reported they “live with other people”, no matter what their housing status. Among the seven respondents who live on the street, four share their living area with other beggars, while three live on their own.

Among the 93 respondents who live in a house, 78 (83.9 per cent) share their house with 5-8 other people, six (6.5 per cent) live with more than eight people and two (2.2 per cent) live only with two other people. The remaining seven respondents did not indicate with how many people they share their house.

**Table 9: Whether living alone, by housing status (%) N=100**

Whether living alone	Housing status					Sleep on streets/ in plastic shelter along streets
	Own your own house	Rent a house	Rent room in a house	Rent bed in room		
By yourself	14.3	4.9	12.5	0		42.9
With other people	85.7	95.1	87.5	100.0		57.1
Total	100	100	100	100		100

**Housing and material assets**

A short series of questions elicited basic information on material assets using an asset inventory, along with information on access to water, sanitation and electricity. These are listed below, and responses to some

questions were combined and calculated to yield a poverty indicator, presented below. The findings clearly show that those interviewed live in significant poverty.<sup>28</sup>

### *Types of housing*

In the preliminary interviews, only two individuals (both men) stated that they had no home. The survey yielded comparable data. Some 7 per cent of those surveyed stated that they either were sleeping directly on the streets or living on the streets in a plastic shelter. Of these, four people said they had been living on the streets for more than five years, and three individuals had been living in such an arrangement for ten or more years.

The majority of survey respondents (61 per cent) rent or share rent for a house. An additional 16 per cent rented a room in a house, and 2 per cent rented a bed in a room.

Interestingly, 14 per cent stated that they owned their own homes. Some of these individuals may have owned their own homes before becoming disabled. It is of note that the housing “owned” may constitute nothing more than a very small house made of corrugated iron and plastic sheeting on land they do not own, so “home ownership” in this case may not represent a major economic asset. The data on crowded housing conditions may reflect the fact that even those who own their homes must take in boarders to make ends meet.

Only 14.2 per cent of people living in a house have a home with three or more rooms. Overall, the majority of the 93 people live in a house with one room (42.9 per cent) or two rooms (42.9 per cent) that they share with 5-8 people (71.4 per cent). People who rent a bed live in one - or two-roomed houses that they share on average with five people or more.

**Table 10: Housing status by number of rooms in the house (%) N=93**

Number of rooms	Housing status			
	Own your own house	Rent a house	Rent room in a house	Rent bed in room
1 room	42.9	91.8	62.5	50.0
2 rooms	42.9	8.2	37.5	50.0
>3 rooms	14.3	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

<sup>28</sup> In this study, conclusions can be made about the absolute poverty of the respondents, but the issue of relative poverty – whether disabled beggars are significantly poorer than those who live in the surrounding community – is a question that will be addressed in future research.

**Table 11: Housing status by number of people living in the household (%) N=93**

People in the household	Housing status			
	Own your own house	Rent a house	Rent room in a house	Rent bed in room
2-5	14.3	0	0	0
5-8	71.4	86.9	87.5	50.0
>8	0	8.2	0	50.0
No answer	14.3	4.9	12.5	0
Total	100	100	100	100

### *Monthly rent*

Informants were asked how much rent they paid on a monthly basis. A quarter (25 per cent) said that they currently did not pay rent – reflecting both the numbers who sleep on the streets as well as those who stay in their own homes. Over half (56 per cent) of those who said they “owned their own homes” paid rent on a monthly basis, indicating that even if homes are owned there are monthly housing expenses to be met. As noted above, many of the homes were very meagre structures – corrugated iron walls and roofs, quickly constructed with plastic sheeting or plastic bags to fill in holes.

Of those who live in a house, 30 (32.3 per cent) paid more than 200 birr monthly, with around a third (27 respondents; 29 per cent) paying between 100 and 200 birr and a quarter (18 respondents; 19.4 per cent) paying less than 100 birr. Another 18 (19.4 per cent) declared they stay for free.

In the initial set of interviews, several informants reported that their landlord or landlady kept the rent a bit lower because they were disabled. But an equal number reported that many landlords were not anxious to rent to them because of their low status, stigma against people with disabilities and the fear that a person with a disability was more likely to become ill and unable to pay the rent. In such cases, the landlord would be forced to evict them and clearly a number did not want to be put in that position.

Some 87.5 per cent of people who only rent a room in a house spend between 50 and 150 birr per month. Finally, people who rent a bed spent between 100 and 200 birr per month.

**Table 12: Monthly house rent by housing status (%) N=93**

Monthly house rent	Housing status			
	Own your own house	Rent a house	Rent room in a house	Rent bed in room
Stay for free	100	6.6	0	0
1-50 birr	0	6.6	6.3	0
50-99 birr	0	8.2	50.0	0
100-150 birr	0	14.8	37.5	50.0
151-200 birr	0	14.8	6.3	50.0
>200 birr	0	49.2	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

A cross-tabulation of monthly housing expenses and housing status reflects a range of rental versus housing patterns. A quarter, or 25 per cent, of the total number of individuals surveyed reported having no housing expenses (stay for free); however, of this 25 per cent more than half (56 per cent) own their own houses and 28 per cent sleep on the streets. Only a relatively low percentage (16 per cent) have the full housing costs covered by someone else or are allowed to actually “stay for free”. Another 27 per cent of those surveyed pay between 100-200 birr a month, and a significant minority (30 per cent) pay over 200 birr a month for a house or a room in a house, so it is fair to conclude that housing takes up a significant percentage of most people’s income.

**Table 13: Monthly collected money by monthly house rent (%) N=93**

Monthly earned money	Monthly house rent					
	Stay for free	1-50 birr	50-99 birr	100-150 birr	151-200 birr	>200 birr
<50 birr	0	20.0	0	0	0	0
100-200 birr	22.2	80.0	30.8	18.8	9.1	3.3
200-300 birr	38.9	0	30.8	31.3	18.2	10.0
300-400 birr	27.8	0	30.8	37.5	18.2	26.7
>400	0	0	0	6.3	27.3	16.6
I don’t know	11.1	0	7.7	6.3	18.2	43.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### *Number of rooms*

While 87 per cent of respondents stated they live with five or more people, over three quarters of these respondents (78.4 per cent) reported they lived in a house with only one room. An additional one in five (19.3 per cent) lived in a house with two rooms. Only 2.1 per cent of all respondents lived in a house with more than three rooms.

The findings on living space indicate that the majority of respondents lived in very overcrowded conditions. For example, 60 respondents said that they were living in a one-roomed house with five to eight others, while six respondents shared a house with over eight others.

### *Access to water, sanitation and electricity*

Of those who lived in a house, 13 people (14 per cent) had access to a water pipe, sink or well in the house, and six (6.5 per cent) reported having a toilet in the home. Another 28 (30.1 per cent) had access to water in or near the house (defined as within a five-minute walk of the home). Some 43 respondents (46.2 per cent) reported needing to travel “more than 5 minutes” to access a water pipe, sink or well, and 28 (30.1 per cent) also had to travel more than five minutes to reach a toilet or pit latrine. Nine people (9.7 per cent) reported having no clean water sources nearby their homes, and 26 (28 per cent) had no toilet or pit latrine nearby.

**Table 14: Access to water by access to toilet or pit latrine in the household (%) N=93**

Access to water from water pipes/sink/well in the household	Access to toilet or pit latrine in the household?			
	In the house	Near house	Some distance from house (>5 min)	No facilities nearby
In the house	100	9.1	3.6	11.5
Near house	0	51.5	21.4	19.2
At distance from the house (>5min)	0	33.3	67.9	50.0
No facilities nearby	0	6.1	7.1	19.2
Total	100	100	100	100

All respondents who have access to a toilet in the house also have access to water pipes. Of those who do not have a toilet in the house, one in five (19.2 per cent) also did not have access to water facilities, and 50 per cent needed to walk more than five minutes to reach the nearest water facilities. Moreover, 67.9 per cent of people who have toilet facilities at some distance from the house also need to walk for more than five minutes to have access to water facilities.

Access to electricity was also assumed to be an indicator of poverty; however, the urban nature of this population meant that most households have access to electricity, and among those who lived in a house (93 per cent), 85 people (91.4 per cent) of those surveyed reported that their homes had electricity. Notably, however, eight people (8.6 per cent) of these urban households did not have electricity – presumably because they could not afford it. A cross-tabulation of access to in-house water, sanitation and electricity finds that only 6 per cent of all households had all three, with 77 per cent of the households having only electricity and some form of latrine. Of all the households, just 4 per cent lacked water, a latrine and electricity.

### *Basic household expenses*

Respondents to the survey were next asked a range of questions about basic expenses related to food, rent, transportation, education, childcare and training that might help them find another job. Additional questions were asked about expenses related to medical care.

All the respondents listed food as a basic household expense they pay for using the money they earn. Some 82 per cent paid money for the rent, 81 per cent for transportation, 18 per cent for training or education (and 25 per cent for the education of their children), 36 per cent also paid money for some medical care (Western) related to their disability, such as medication costs, bandages and appliances. An additional 5 per cent reported that other disability-related expenses, such as canes, wheelchairs or prosthetics, also took part of their collections.<sup>29</sup> Traditional medical care from healers, amulets, holy water and other treatments intended to care for or cure their disability were expenses reported by 22 per cent, and there was an overlap, with many paying for both Western and traditional care related to their disability as part of their routine household expenses.

In the survey, rotating savings schemes or burial societies identified in the in-depth interviews and focus groups were not included – but this constituted at least one additional expense that needs to be more fully considered in future studies.

Patterns of spending varied, but the results were interesting: 14 per cent reported spending money only on the most basic items – food and rent – while an additional 20 per cent spent only on food, rent and the transportation needed to get to and from sites in order to beg. A quarter (25 per cent) listed support and education of their children as a major item in their budgets.

#### *Household assets*

A review of household assets was also made in order to identify what items or groups of items were common to households of disabled beggars. Respondents were asked whether they owned cooking pots, water jars, blankets, a bed, a change of clothes, a radio or a television set.

While there was a range of assets, the level of poverty indicated by the responses was striking. Among those who lived in a house, 37 (39.8 per cent) had no bed, sleeping instead on the floor, and ten (10.8 per cent) owned no blanket, despite the fact that winters in Addis Ababa can be cold. It was found that 15 (16.1 per cent) had no cooking pot and eight (8.6 per cent) no water jar.

On the other hand, 46 per cent either owned a radio or lived in a household that has a radio, and 24 per cent of individuals reported that they owned, or lived in a household that owned, a television set. (Only four households that owned a television set did not also have a radio, so there is a considerable overlap here, with most households that have a television also being able to afford a radio). Second-hand television sets are easily come by in Addis Ababa and in the crowded living situations reported by our informants, one television is shared by a number of people, so access to a television may not reflect prosperity as much as density of living arrangements. Among those who lived in a house (93 per cent), only 18 respondents (19.4 per cent) had all the assets listed, while 22 (23.7 per cent) declared they had all of them except television, four (4.3 per cent) had all of

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<sup>29</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence, the sum of the percentages is not 100. In future studies, care should be taken to see if the same group is spending in all three categories (Western/traditional/assistive devices) or if these are distinct groups. This was not done here.

them except radio, and six (6.5 per cent) all of them except radio and television.

To determine the level of poverty, the responses to questions on assets (ownership of cooking pot, water jar, blanket, bed, change of clothes, radio, television) were calculated to yield a poverty indicator. Among those who lived in a home, eight (8.6 per cent) possessed only one of these items and could be considered extremely poor, but the balance of those surveyed also reported significant levels of poverty. Forty (43.1 per cent) stated they possessed only 2-4 of these items (most had a water jar, cooking pot and blanket), and another 40 (42 per cent) reported having 5-6 of these six assets. The conclusion must be that, as a group, those surveyed are truly poor, the majority lacking basic assets needed on a daily basis and lacking access to adequate housing, water and sanitation facilities.

### ***Social networks and support systems***

To help ascertain what types of social support systems exist, a series of questions were asked about family ties, relationships with other beggars and social support networks.

The vast majority (90 per cent) reported they “live with other people”, most frequently in households, but only slightly more than half (51 per cent) lived with family. Those living with “family members” were asked how they were related to these people. The majority lived in a nuclear family arrangement, with a significant other – a spouse (35; 68.6 per cent) or unmarried partner (nine; 17.6 per cent) and children (34; 66.7 per cent).<sup>30</sup> Two (3.9 per cent) of those surveyed lived with parents, only two (3.9 per cent) with a brother or sister, and none reported living with an aunt, uncle or cousins. Six (11.8 per cent) lived with “other relatives”.<sup>31</sup> Around one in five (21 per cent) lived with friends, and slightly under one in five (18 per cent) lived with roommates. Just 10 per cent of all people with disabilities reported living alone.

The number of individuals in living arrangements other than that of the extended family is striking. Despite the fact that the cultural norm in modern Ethiopia, in both rural and urban areas, is still to live with family or extended family, only four people out of 51 (7.8 per cent) lived in such an arrangement. The implications of this finding will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

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<sup>30</sup> Similarly, there are some inconsistencies when asking whether their children live with them. In fact, in one case (Question G4) 30 per cent of participants answered in the positive to this question, but the percentage is 34 per cent when considering responses to a similar item (Question B6). This could possibly be considered a sensitive topic, and future research should put it carefully, by using a well-trained interviewer to cross-check the consistency of participants’ answers. In any case, taking into account responses to Question G4, a remaining 34 per cent stated their children lived with other family members or not in the same household. One in ten reported they had grown children who now live on their own.

<sup>31</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence, the sum of the percentages is not 100.



### **Views of family members on begging activities**

Social isolation seemed to be a theme throughout the interviews, and focus groups and the findings from the survey underscored the prominent position this seems to play in the lives of those interviewed.

In response to a question regarding whether their families knew that they begged, a third (31 per cent) of respondents stated that they were “not in touch with people in my family”. One in five (20 per cent) reported that their families knew what they were doing for a living, realized they were trying to be self-supporting and “respect me for doing this”. Another 19 per cent said they were in touch, but their families “do not know what work I do”. An additional 17 per cent said that their families knew about the begging and did not approve, but realized that the disabled person needed the money. Finally, 13 per cent said that their families knew what work they did, but “did not care”.

### **Relationships with other disabled beggars**

A significant point of the discussion in the literature points to bands or groups of beggars who work together or are available for mutual support. However, the survey data indicate that strong or on-going bonds with other disabled beggars in Addis Ababa were, in fact, largely absent. Fewer than one in five survey respondents (17 per cent) said that they knew other disabled beggars well and looked out for them or worked closely together. Over a third of survey respondents (38 per cent) reported being polite but not knowing other disabled beggars well, while an additional 18 per cent reported they “look out” for each other but do not have “strong bonds”. One in five (20 per cent) said they “compete for territory”, and 7 per cent reported they “never” speak to other disabled beggars. Women were more likely than men (43.6 per cent versus 34.4 per cent) to say “we are polite but do not know each other well”. On the other hand, men were more likely to say that they knew other disabled beggars well and looked out for them, or worked closely together (23 per cent versus 7.7 per cent). As stated previously, however, the sample size was too small to draw definitive conclusions from this, but does warrant further exploration.

In the preliminary interviews, it was also striking that when asked to give examples of help given by other disabled beggars, several people volunteered that “I will sometimes watch another person’s spot while they go to the bathroom”, while a blind woman said “Someone will help me cross the street to get the bus”. None offered more extensive examples of “help”. In the focus group discussions, a number of disabled beggars admitted to being embarrassed or ashamed of begging and consistently tried to avoid close ties or extended conversations with others while begging.

### **Relationships with non-disabled beggars**

Relationships with non-disabled beggars were even more distant than with other disabled beggars. Only 2 per cent of respondents report having regular contact with non-disabled beggars or working together. Almost half of those interviewed (46 per cent) said that they are polite but distant, one in five (20 per cent) said that they compete with non-disabled beggars for territory, and a further one in five (19 per cent) said they “never” speak to

them. Some 10 per cent reported that disabled and non-disabled beggars look out for each other and just 2 per cent said they know each other well.

Comparing these results with the reported interaction with other disabled beggars in terms of hostility, collaboration and co-existence,<sup>32</sup> it seems that disabled and non-disabled beggars can be considered two separate subgroups. Generally there is a lack of collaboration. Among those who have a hostile relationship with other disabled beggars, 85.2 per cent have the same kind of relationship with other, non-disabled beggars, 11.1 per cent have some form of co-existence and 3.7 per cent collaborate with them. Among respondents who co-exist with other disabled beggars, 21.4 per cent have hostile relations with non-disabled beggars, 73.2 per cent also co-exist with them and just 5.4 per cent collaborate with them. Finally, among respondents who collaborate with disabled beggars, 23.5 per cent have hostile relationships with non-disabled beggars, 70.6 per cent co-exist with non-disabled beggars, and 5.9 per cent collaborate with them also. Those who had no relationships with disabled beggars were even less likely to interact with non-disabled beggars.

In preliminary interviews and focus groups, a number of participants complained that the more physically agile non-disabled beggars routinely push in front of them when someone stops to give alms, “grabbing” a much larger share of the money.

### **Interactions with people in the community**

Those interviewed and surveyed were also asked what community members thought about giving money to disabled beggars – and were encouraged to give more than one answer, as they thought appropriate. A large majority, 96 per cent, volunteered the fact that members of the general public feel sorry for disabled beggars and think that there is nothing else they can do to get money. Some 27 per cent also reported that the general public makes a direct link between being disabled and begging, believing that God has decided this is their lot in life. Nearly half (48 per cent) also reported that giving alms helps the average person fulfil his or her religious obligations. However, 17 per cent noted that many members of the general public incorrectly believe that beggars make much more money than they actually do, and 10 per cent also agreed with the statement that the general public thinks that people who beg “are lazy”.<sup>33</sup>

### **Views and experience**

Survey respondents were also asked what they think of non-disabled people who beg. Two-fifths or 41 per cent said that these people do not need to beg. However, over a third (37 per cent) felt that the lives of non-disabled beggars are often hard and they do need to beg. Finally, 22 per cent did not have an opinion, or at least did not volunteer it to the data collectors.

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<sup>32</sup> Hostility includes “I never speak to them” and “We compete for the territory”; Co-existence includes “We are polite but do not know each other well” and “We look out for each other but do not have strong bonds”; Collaboration includes “Many of us know each other well and look out for each other” and “We have an organization/band – regularly talk/work together”.

<sup>33</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence, the sum of the percentages is greater than 100.

### **Beggars “faking” disability**

It is reported frequently in the press and popular culture that some non-disabled beggars pretend to have a disability in order to make more money; this was widely confirmed by the disabled beggars interviewed. Three-quarters of survey respondents (75 per cent) said that they knew of non-disabled people who pretended to be disabled while begging to increase their collections. This was a common complaint among those interviewed in the exploratory in-depth interviews, as well as in the focus groups. Respondents felt deeply that this type of fakery was wrong, brought into question the legitimacy of their own disabilities, and took money away from disabled beggars who truly needed the money.

### **Violence towards disabled beggars**

Informants were next asked a series of questions about being the victims of violence while on the streets. While 65 per cent reported they had never been physically harmed while begging, 35 per cent had been victims of a violent act. Of these, 14 people (40 per cent) had been physically harmed by strangers, nine by police or security people (25.7 per cent), seven by other beggars (20 per cent), three by local merchants or people in the neighbourhood (8.6 per cent), and two by “other” (5.7 per cent). Of those who reported being harmed, 16 people (45.7 per cent) were physically disabled, ten (28.6 per cent) were people who were blind or visually impaired and five (14.3 per cent) described themselves as having multiple disabilities, while two (5.7 have) had leprosy, one was deaf, and one was intellectually disabled.

No one surveyed, either male or female, reported having been sexually abused. Whether this reflected reality is unclear. Sexual abuse of people with disabilities is frequently reported in societies around the world, but not always discussed. The adamant denial of those interviewed – as one said, “This type of behaviour never happens in Ethiopia” – certainly reflects a cultural norm that such issues are not frequently discussed.

Robbery, however, was a different story. Over half of respondents, 54 per cent, said they were “sometimes” robbed, with 20 per cent saying they were robbed “frequently”. Only 26 per cent said they were never robbed. Robbery generally entailed someone snatching their cup or begging bowl, assuming that because they were physically disabled or blind these disabled beggars would be unable to run after them.

### **Intentional maiming**

The practice of maiming non-disabled children or adults so they can gain a living as a disabled beggar has been reported in a number of countries. However, 65 per cent of the beggars surveyed said they had never heard of this practice. Approximately 27 per cent said that they had heard of this practice but believed it to be very rare or “just a story”. Only 6 per cent of all those surveyed had met someone who said it had actually happened to them, and 2 per cent said that they themselves had been maimed or further disabled in order to beg but provided no further details. Everyone responding to this particular question, even those who said that they had themselves experienced this, seemed shocked by the thought that intentionally maiming

an individual for profit would take place, from senior government officials to the disabled beggars themselves. If maiming individuals to make them beggars is a practice in Ethiopia at all, it appears to be a rare one.

### **Renting or stealing of children**

Finally, 54 per cent of all those interviewed said that they had heard stories that people borrow/rent or steal disabled children and use them for begging, but no one reported knowing of any cases where this had actually happened. A number attributed these stories to what would be considered “urban myth”. Interestingly, professionals in the development community were more likely to bring up this story than any of the beggars interviewed, with several relating the story to the interviewer with obvious concern. The idea that maids in wealthier households might “rent” their employer’s babies or toddlers to either disabled or non-disabled beggars during the day, when the parents were away at the office, was something that raised serious concerns among the middle classes who left their children in care of a nanny or housekeeper during the day.

### **Control of beggars by non-disabled individuals**

Although there are reports in a number of countries of criminals or “businessmen” who manage and sometimes enslave people with disabilities into begging “gangs” or “rings” (see pp 12-13), there was little evidence of this practice in Addis Ababa. In the preliminary interviews, most people said they begged on their own, and there were no middlemen involved. The vast majority (92 per cent) reported the same in the survey. Approximately one in ten (8 per cent) of survey respondents had heard about individuals who tell people with disabilities where they can and cannot work, or who take money in exchange for a place to live, food, and/or “protection”. These responses are also in keeping with the responses to the question on decisions about where to beg, where only one individual reported that someone else tells them where they can and cannot beg.

The question asked was if they had heard about this type of situation, and not whether they themselves were part of it, as it was felt that asking openly about this might endanger the informants if this was a common practice. Thus, it is impossible to determine the prevalence of such practices. It seems, however, to be rare in Addis Ababa. It is also possible that those who reported having heard about this had heard about the same cases, or had come across a newspaper article or a radio broadcast that had mentioned this, as they all used the same story to illustrate their point.

## **Section 3: Plans for the future**

Being a disabled beggar is generally seen by experts and advocates working on poverty and disability concerns as the “end of the line”, with many disability-specific and disability-inclusive education efforts, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes, micro-finance and self-help organizations justifying their existence by their ability to keep people from “winding up as beggars”.

It is therefore particularly interesting to note that, when asked whether they would always work as a beggar, only 13 per cent responded “yes”. A

majority (55 per cent) said “no” and another 32 per cent answered that they “don’t know”. In other words, 87 per cent saw a brighter future for themselves, or were unsure what would happen in the future, but had not lost all hope of something else turning up.

In light of this response, a follow up question asked “If you could do something else to make money, would you prefer it to begging?”, to which 45 per cent answered “no”, while 32 per cent said “yes” and another 23 per cent said they “did not know”. When discussed in interviews and focus groups, the consensus was that another job would be preferable to begging as long as people were able to make about the same amount of money.

As a follow-up, those surveyed were also asked “If you could do something else, what it would be?” Interestingly, informants seemed to have realistic expectations of what jobs they might be able to do. “Selling on the street” (street vendors) and “running a small shop” were the most frequent responses, with 59 per cent of informants stating that they felt these were viable options for them. Other responses, such as working in an office, doing housework, working in the needle trades, and shoe and metal repair shops were also realistic responses collected.

In interviews and focus groups, a number of informants seemed to have already given a good deal of thought to this. One young man who walked with crutches said, “I could sit on the street and sell small items. There is a man I know who owns a building nearby, and he would let me store my goods with him in the evening”. Another woman said, “I once worked as a seamstress and if I could get a sewing machine and a small part of a room to work in, I could make dresses again”.

**Table 15: Preference among potential jobs (%) N=100**

<b>Potential job</b>	
Sell things on the street	25
Have a small shop	34
Work in an office/small business	2
Do housework	5
Sewing/dressmaking	11
Hairdressing	1
Wood/metal work/shoe repair	3
Music	1
Other	18
Total	100

***Reasons for continuing to beg***

Following this, informants were then asked, “why can you not do this now?” Respondents were allowed to give as many reasons as they believed relevant. Of the respondents (N=75), 90 per cent said they could not get enough money together to start such a venture. Some 25 per cent also felt they did not have the education or training to get another type of job, while 12 per cent stated that they were unsure where to start. Only 4 per cent said

that they felt they were not well enough or strong enough to try another field of work, while the remaining 4 per cent said they “did not know”.

#### **Section 4: Awareness of disability rights**

Finally, a key set of research questions in planning this study was to establish whether the disabled beggars in Addis Ababa were aware of disability-related laws and policies, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, local disability organizations that might help them, what they knew about such organizations and whether they themselves had ever been in touch with or benefited from such organizations.

##### ***Knowledge of organizations for disabled people***

Notably, 50 per cent of those surveyed had never heard of any disability-related support or advocacy organizations, while 43 per cent had heard that such organizations existed, and 7 per cent were unclear whether they had heard of these organizations or not.

Of the 43 who have heard of organizations that “helped disabled people” almost half (21 people; 48.8 per cent) had heard of NGOs such as the Association for the Blind, Oxfam and Save the Children, while a smaller number (eight; 18.6 per cent) had heard of religious societies or institutions that offer either disability-specific help or general community outreach that includes people with disabilities. Only two (4.7 per cent) had heard of any government programmes for people with disabilities, and just five (11.6 per cent) knew of medical organizations that provided help to disabled people. Significantly, only seven (16.3 per cent) of the total number surveyed had ever heard of any of the local DPOs. Another way of phrasing this is that 83.7 per cent of those disabled beggars surveyed had never heard about the local DPOs.

##### ***Contact with/help from these organizations***

Of the 43 respondents who had heard of any organization that specifically helped people with disabilities, only 18 (41.8 per cent) had ever been in touch with such organizations. When asked about the nature of this contact, only three (6.8 per cent) reported being in regular touch and receiving help on an ongoing basis, while ten (23 per cent) reported they had a one-time interaction with an NGO or medical charity to obtain food, clothing, medical equipment or information on services or rights. Nine (20.9 per cent) reported that they had approached one or more of these organizations for some type of assistance but found the charity “could not help” them.

##### ***Laws to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities***

Finally, informants were also asked about their knowledge of laws regarding people with disabilities. The majority (73 per cent) had heard nothing about laws that gave rights to people with disabilities. Only 27 per cent reported having heard of any laws; and of this group, most could only say that there were “new laws” and that “these gave more rights”. In particular, 22 people thought that the law bestows rights; only one person

thought that the laws guarantee services; and four people knew about the law but could not say any more about it. Similar responses were found in interviews and focus groups where small numbers knew that new laws that “give rights” to people with disabilities – but could not say what these rights entailed.

### ***Awareness of the UNCRPD***

Finally, 82 per cent of those surveyed did not know about the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The other 18 per cent had heard of the Convention, and in interviews and focus groups, several people also reported having heard about it. However, all of those who had “heard about the Convention” made reference to the same recent broadcast on a national radio station, so it appears that all had gained this information from the same recent source.

Of the 18 surveyed who had heard of the Convention, 12 said it “gives rights” to people with disabilities, but only three thought it “allows people with disabilities equal access to all rights and services” while the remaining three had heard the Convention existed but could say nothing more about it.

## Chapter 4: Discussion

In this section, the results are discussed within three overarching themes, with particular attention to findings that offer potential points for future interventions:

- what factors seem to be involved in the decision to turn to begging? This includes general demographic background, education and employment history;
- what is daily life like for those people with disabilities who beg? and
- what does the future look like to those disabled beggars interviewed and surveyed?

Components of this larger question include:

- do these people have knowledge of development efforts specifically targeted to or available for people with disabilities?
- are they aware of disability advocacy efforts? and
- what is their knowledge of the new laws that address disability – including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

In Chapter 3, a number of distinct subgroups were identified within the disabled beggar population surveyed. This is an interesting finding, as almost all existing studies of disabled beggars discuss this population as an undifferentiated or generally homogenous group. The fact that the life histories of the disabled beggars interviewed or surveyed for this study seem to fall into one of four distinct categories is not only interesting in itself, but also presents a series of clear points of potential intervention that could either keep some individuals from winding up on the streets, or more effectively, be used to provide options for disabled people now working on the streets. Of particular note is the fact that individuals interviewed or surveyed in Addis Ababa fall into several broad demographic categories:

- People with pre-existing disabilities, the vast majority of whom came from rural areas, who decided they could not remain in the countryside;
- People with pre-existing disabilities from rural areas who came to Addis Ababa to seek medical care
- People with pre-existing disabilities who came to the city to obtain an education; and
- Non-disabled people coming to seek work, who became disabled once in Addis Ababa.

### Theme 1: Life before begging

#### *Demographics*

##### **Distribution by sex**

There was a disproportionate number of men with disabilities on the streets begging and fewer women (61 per cent male versus 39 per cent female). This gender imbalance may simply reflect our small sample size,



but these findings are similar to the findings reported in the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' survey (unpublished).

It may be argued that men are more likely to become disabled through accident or injury, or through military service, than women, and once disabled, have more difficulty finding a role in their families and communities. Although the recent World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) reports a higher rate of disability among adult women than men, women with comparable types of disabilities may be less likely to turn to begging because they can fulfil traditional household roles such as cooking, cleaning and childcare that would make them more likely to remain with their families. But this may be balanced by the lower status that women, particularly unmarried women, have within families. Future studies should examine these issues in greater detail.

### **Age range**

This study specifically focused on disabled adults, aged 18 and above; however, it is of note that while officials spoke of disabled children begging, none were observed begging during the course of this study. The majority of those begging (71 per cent) were between 18 and 45 years old, the prime age for employment according to the ILO. The relatively small number of younger people (18-24) may reflect the fact that their parents are still alive, since while they live, their child with a disability may continue to live with them and be supported by their immediate family.

While a number of frail elderly people who do not consider themselves disabled were observed begging, only three people who identified themselves as disabled stated they were above the age of 60. It may be that people with disabilities tend not to survive to old age. The average life span in Ethiopia is currently 47. However, 29 per cent of our sample were aged 46 or above and these individuals had all begged for some years; none reported turning to begging later in life as a result of a late-onset disability. There may be another reason as well; 71 per cent of those surveyed reported having one or more child. It is possible that as these children mature to adulthood, they begin to support their disabled parents and encourage or insist that their parents stop begging.

### **Types of disabilities**

People with the full range of disabilities were not represented on the streets of Addis Ababa. Eighty per cent of those surveyed were either blind/visually impaired (28 per cent), physically disabled (40 per cent), or identified themselves as "multiply disabled" including a physical disability (12 per cent).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities were not observed begging, and it was generally agreed by government officials, disability advocates and the beggars themselves that families with intellectually disabled members did not allow such individuals to beg. The most common reason given was that families fear intellectually disabled relatives would be harmed. However, this may not be the whole story, as families permit individuals with visual impairments and significant physical disabilities to leave home, live on their own beyond the protection of family, and beg.

Another possibility is that individuals with intellectual impairments have a range of abilities. Those with significant intellectual abilities may not have the physical or intellectual capacity to leave the home. Some families may closely restrict the movement of intellectually disabled individuals over safety concerns, but possibly also over fears of what the neighbours will say if such a relative is put on the streets. There may be another explanation as well: many people with intellectual disabilities have the physical capacity to contribute to household work, especially in rural areas where they can do a host of menial jobs related to agriculture and household chores. Of value to the family, they would not be encouraged or forced to leave.

No deaf individuals were identified among the groups of beggars who participated in this study. It was generally agreed by informants, disabled advocates and government officials that deaf individuals could work and were “employable”. Several informants mentioned a local flower-growing enterprise as well as a local furniture-manufacturing business that employ large numbers of deaf individuals. In both focus groups and surveys, it was also said that the Deaf community “looks after its own”.

Few individuals with mental health disabilities were identified; however, unless such individuals self-identify, it is often difficult to distinguish those with mental health disabilities who may beg from non-disabled beggars. This does not mean that people with mental health disabilities do not beg, only that they were not readily identified in this study. Further research is warranted on this subject.

The one other significant group of people identified were individuals who had had leprosy – 13 per cent identified themselves as disabled because of leprosy. This finding will be revisited in the following section, as the position of people with leprosy within the greater population of disabled beggars is complex.

The implications for the distribution of disability groups within the total population of disabled beggars is significant – it means that to address disabled beggars in Ethiopia, agencies can reach a significant proportion of all those who beg by implementing targeted programmes for people with visual and physical impairments.

### **Rural/urban migration**

A striking finding from both the qualitative and quantitative components of this study is that 96 per cent of all disabled beggars were born outside of Addis Ababa. Ten per cent come from a community or farmstead within 100 kilometres, but 86 per cent come from farther than 100 kilometres away.

The basic division found was between people from rural areas who are born with a disability or become disabled before coming to Addis Ababa, and people who became disabled after arriving in the city. While they often wind up begging side by side, these two groups are discussed separately here because there are significant differences between them and points of potential interventions differ as well.

## Individuals who are disabled before coming to Addis Ababa

For those who were disabled before arriving at Addis Ababa, many reported that a similar set of factors made them decide to leave home, with poverty only one of the considerations:

<b>Push factors to leave rural area</b>	<b>Pull factors to move to city</b>
Stigma and prejudice	Possibility of less stigma and prejudice
Social isolation	Possibility of social inclusion, marriage and family
Lack of education or medical care for people with disabilities	Possibility of education/skills and medical care; hope of a “cure” for their disability
Lack of work/inability to contribute to family well-being	Possibility of work

### *Social stigma, prejudice and social isolation*

Of those who were disabled before coming to Addis Ababa, many reported facing severe stigma, discrimination and social isolation, factors that served as strong motivations to “push” them to move to urban areas. In interviews and focus groups, the comments were the same: “my family was ashamed of me”; “I was so lonely”; “everyone thought I was cursed”; “my family thought I had sinned”.

The majority of those born with a disability or disabled early in childhood had little or no schooling (see table 3). Many said that in addition to the stigma faced, there was little or nothing they could do, or that people would permit them to do, to contribute economically to their households. Informants recalled facing a continuing series of demeaning situations and were constantly reminded that they were a drain on their household’s resources. A number used the same expression: “I felt like a parasite”.

Many reported a similar pattern of events in their decision to come to Addis Ababa. They had lived with parents in rural areas or in small villages or towns. A small number left when their parents were still alive, viewing their leaving home as a sacrifice on their part for the well-being of the household – their parents had not thrown them out, but they felt that everyone in their family appreciated it when they disappeared. A number stayed until their mother died and father remarried. At that point, it seems, no other relative was willing or able to support them and they chose to go to the city or were strongly encouraged to go by relatives. While most of the group who reported being pressed by relatives to leave had acquired their disability in childhood or as adolescents, at least one woman interviewed had lost her vision as a young married woman, after which she was so badly abused by her husband and husband’s family that she left, even though she had two young children she was forced to leave behind.

The “pull” factors of better futures in the city were not as strong for many of our informants as had been the “push” factors. Almost everyone left for the “possibility” of a better life, yet few said that they really thought coming to Addis Ababa would significantly improve their lives. Many said they hoped to find some sort of work, and be treated less poorly (few said “treated well”) by those around them. While a significant number (48 per cent) reported that one factor was seeking care or a cure for their disability, few listed this as the primary reason for leaving home. Few who came from

rural areas reported anticipating that they would end up begging, although several had anticipated that this well might be the case.

It is likely that even in the face of poverty and stigma, most people with disabilities living in rural areas remain there. The number of people with disabilities in Addis Ababa would be significantly greater if everyone with a disability in the countryside chose to come to the city. These people apparently live with their parents until their parents' death and then are taken in by siblings, aunts, uncles or other members of their extended families, marry or make other arrangements. As these people do not end up on the streets of Addis Ababa, they did not form part of the sample. Some factor or set of factors must therefore distinguish those who come to the city from those who choose to remain in rural areas.

One hypothesis that appears to be strongly reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative findings from this study, and which deserves further exploration, is that the people with disabilities who come to Addis Ababa and wind up as beggars may be poorer, have weaker family support and be more socially isolated before they migrate than people with comparable disabilities from these same communities who do not move to an urban area.

How people from rural areas travelled to Addis Ababa itself reflects social isolation. Most individuals reported that they had hitched a ride with a distant relative or neighbour who was coming to the city for some other reason. None reported coming with their parents or a close family member. In several cases, informants reported that their parent or another relative bought them a one-way bus ticket. Several walked.

The majority also reported they are no longer in touch, or only in distant touch, with rural relatives. Indeed, in the interviews and focus groups, a number mentioned that they did not know if their parents or siblings were still alive, or if their parents knew they themselves were alive. A number stated that they believed their families assumed that they were long since dead. Many also stated that they are too embarrassed to go home, given their current circumstances.

#### *People with disabilities who come to Addis Ababa seeking medical care*

In interviews and focus groups a number of people (48 per cent) reported that one of the reasons they decided to come to Addis Ababa was the expectation of receiving medical treatment for their disability. However, within this group was a distinct subgroup which had come specifically to seek medical care with the intention of eventually returning home. Often their families had already spent what little money they had on medical treatment and gathered together enough money to send their relative to a hospital or clinic in Addis Ababa as a last resort. Some people came not for Western medical treatment, but rather hoped to be cured through the regular use of holy water at one of the shrines, and some hoped for a cure through a combination of Western medical treatment, prayers and holy water. They reach the city impoverished, and because of transportation costs, they often arrive alone. Many do receive treatment in hospitals, clinics or in some government or NGO-run medical facilities, and the treatment itself is often free. However, food and housing is usually far more expensive than

anticipated and once treatment is finished, clinics and hospitals routinely discharge disabled patients to the streets without ensuring that they have enough money to be able to return home. A number of those interviewed reported that being sent to Addis Ababa was a “last ditch” effort for a cure and since they had not been “cured” they felt they cannot return home to, as one man put it, “be a burden”. Several simply could not afford the bus fare to return home. A number of people in this situation told the interviewer that beginning to beg was their only choice.

### *Coming to acquire an education*

Another subgroup identified among those interviewed and surveyed was that of people with disabilities who had originally come to Addis Ababa to attend boarding schools for the Deaf and the blind. These schools, boarding many children from distant rural areas, are dedicated to encouraging the best scholarship possible. This is admirable, but not all students do equally well in school and many of the boys and girls who attended are young, impressionable and away from home for the first time. A number decide to leave school before finishing their degree.

These children, especially those who do not complete their education, often cannot or will not return home. Some feel they have let their families down by not finishing their education and are ashamed to go home. Others have been sent to boarding school with the express intention of having them establish new, separate lives in the city and have been told by their families that there is nothing for them at home. Children who drop out of these schools before graduating often have few marketable skills. They are vulnerable and alone in a big city. Some are further enticed by the “easy money” of begging. Specialized schools currently do little to help these “school leavers” make the transition to work and the adult world.

### **Individuals who become disabled after arriving in Addis Ababa**

The final demographic group identified were people with disabilities who came to the city as non-disabled youth or young adults to find work. While 4 per cent of those surveyed reported arriving in the city as a young non-disabled people, this number may in fact be higher if the 38 per cent of those who reported becoming disabled in adulthood were further questioned on the specific nature of their disability. In interviews and focus groups, a significant number of men (8 of the 24 interviewed) attributed their disabilities to accidents at the worksite. Two women interviewed reported spinal cord injuries through traffic accidents.

These individuals reported strikingly similar histories. Part of a global migration into urban areas, all of those interviewed who reported becoming disabled after reaching Addis Ababa arrived as young adults with some education, skills and work experience prior to becoming disabled. Many had lived in the city for several months to several years and had already distanced themselves from their rural families, but had not yet established strong social networks in the city when they became disabled while working as day labourers on construction sites or doing manual labour. For example, one man had scaffolding collapse underneath him, another suffered a spinal cord injury while hauling sacks of potatoes, and another touched a live wire

while working as a bricklayer and fell, suffering both severe burns and a spinal cord injury.

Once injured, they were taken to hospital, where they received good and often extensive clinical care. Because most had disabling spinal cord injuries, they remained in hospital for a year or more, where they continued to receive food and shelter. When the hospital staff felt nothing more could be done medically and bed space was no longer available, these men were either discharged directly to the streets or sent to a long-term institutional setting for an additional one to three years. A number of medical facilities offer some physical rehabilitation, but once it becomes clear that the patient is permanently disabled, rehabilitation efforts are limited. What is particularly striking among this subgroup is that, having had little or no exposure to disability prior to becoming disabled themselves, they held (and continue to hold) the same prejudices and misinformation about what it means to be disabled as do the general population. Many in this group seemed to be at a particular loss about what to do, where to go, or how to re-imagine their future as a person with a disability. All those interviewed reported that they felt strongly that they could not return to their rural families because “they would only be a burden”. With no social networks and a pre-existing assumption that the only thing a disabled man could do is to beg, it is perhaps not surprising that so many felt they had little alternative.

For those who had become disabled after coming to Addis Ababa, their social ties to extended family and home were also weak. Many had been away from home for months or years before their injuries, and by the time they were released after several years of treatment from the hospital and rehabilitation centres their ties to family in rural areas were further attenuated. Of all those surveyed, only one man reported travelling back home to see his rural relatives. Many in both groups stated that they had not been in touch with their family of origin for years, and a number were not sure if their relatives were still alive.

Those interviewed, of course, may represent a biased sample. Presumably, many who become disabled after arriving in Addis Ababa either return home to the countryside or find a way to make a living other than begging, and hence would not be present among the group interviewed for this study. Nonetheless, a significant number of those found begging on the streets were former labourers, and their histories were consistent enough to raise significant concerns about the lost opportunity for intervention this raises.

A visit to a long-term care institution that provides long-term care for many with spinal cord injuries also proved interesting. The staff was obviously dedicated, although a senior nurse complained that in her opinion the mission of the organization was to help the dying, and as the permanently disabled men who were now on the wards were not dying, they should not be there. There was no attempt, however, to prepare these newly-disabled young men to adjust to living with a disability or to live independently outside of a care centre, nor did there seem to be links between the hospitals or care centres with any DPO or NGO that could help these individuals learn about living with a disability. Indeed, the staff of the long-term care rehabilitation institution interviewed were unfamiliar with DPOs, and had no

knowledge of the UNCRPD, national legislation or other efforts to help people with disabilities establish self-sufficiency. They did, however, express great interest in learning more. The potential for creating links between hospitals, long-term care facilities and local DPOs and NGOs is particularly promising, because many who receive care in these institutions stay for a long period of time, which could be productively used to teach newly-disabled adults about living with a disability, as well as enabling them to acquire skills they could use to support themselves. With timely intervention, this group might never have to end up on the streets in the first place.

### ***Nuclear families, extended families and social support networks***

The social isolation first evident in the transition of disabled beggars from rural to urban dwellers continues to be reflected in the family and social support networks identified through the interviews, focus groups and the survey.

The majority of those surveyed were married or had a life partner and had one or more children, with men more likely to be married, or have been married, and women more likely to be unmarried but living with a partner. Both men and women reported having children in equal numbers. The presence of children in the household is of note because it increases the pressure on many to beg in order to cover child-related expenses: food, housing and health care, as well as school fees and uniforms. Indeed, 25 per cent stated that support for children was a major part of their household expenses. On the other hand, when these children grow up they may help provide their disabled parents with a more economically secure old age – a fact that may be reflected in the lower numbers of people with disabilities begging above their mid-forties – an age at which grown children would conceivably begin to beg to help.

Not all children of disabled beggars lived with their parents. This may be due to marital or household instability, the inability of the parent to look after the child because of disability or poverty, the reticence of the parent to allow the child to be connected to their begging, or the possibility of better opportunities for the child if they were to live in the household of a relative. Also, several disabled women reported being sought out by representatives of local orphanages who offered to place their children in homes. While they are still in touch with their children, call them weekly and see them on holidays, they are not responsible for day-to-day care or support.

Several government officials and DPO advocates said that disabled beggars will use their own children to beg. In studies of non-disabled beggars, there are regular reports that having an infant or young child increased the amount of alms people are given; presumably, this would also be true of disabled beggars. However, it is also noteworthy that few disabled beggars were seen with a child in arms at the time of the field interviews, and those who did have an infant or toddler with them did not report that their children “helped them beg”, but stated that the child was there because they have no alternative childcare arrangements. This survey shows that only a small proportion of disabled beggars reported having their children help them beg and that they do this only when their children are home from

school. As parents, they were unanimous in their hopes that their own children do not grow up to beg.

### **Extended families**

While half of those interviewed and surveyed (51 per cent) lived with a significant other (spouse/partner) and may have children, the fact that few reported strong family ties or lived in a household with additional family members beyond the nuclear family is an important finding. A typical household in Ethiopia is still composed of an extended family – grandparents, parents and children, as well as unmarried uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, cousins and other relatives. Only 5 per cent reported having “extended family” members beyond their immediate nuclear family of a partner and children in the households in which they lived.

In this study, although it might be argued that people with disabilities interviewed were largely from distant rural areas, a very common rural-urban migration pattern is that people coming from rural areas stay with extended family who have already made their way to the city. None of the disabled beggars interviewed adhered to this pattern. It might be that if they had relatives in Addis Ababa, these relatives wanted little to do with them, and the lack of this support mechanism may increase the chances of having to beg.

Even more striking is the fact that 49 per cent of all disabled beggars surveyed currently live with no relatives but instead lodge with friends or with roommates. In a society which, even in urban centres such as Addis Ababa, is still strongly based on extended family ties, the links among our study groups with extended family, especially families of origin, are notable by their absence.

### **Brittle social networks beyond the family**

Relationships with other people working as beggars, either as friends or neighbours, also appeared to be tenuous. People reported recognizing other beggars but maintain a polite distance, even with those beside whom they have begged for years. “We chat”, some reported, “but don’t discuss anything in depth”. Others reported that the disabled and non-disabled beggars did small favours for each other – holding a begging spot while someone went for food or to use the bathroom, but that they otherwise did not interact. People reported that they often recognize other beggars, but do not have much to do with them.

In summary, most people with disabilities in rural areas are likely to remain in rural areas, even if their lives are precarious; those who chose to come to the city may be from families who are extremely poor, less supportive or families that may have some difficulty in functioning. Thus, while it may be argued that these people working as beggars isolate themselves or are isolated by others because of the shame or embarrassment of begging, the picture may be more complicated. These individuals may be less adept than others in forming and maintaining close ties with family and friends, or in building and keeping social networks, and thus are less able than others to take advantage of networks and associations with people to keep from beginning to beg in the first place. Common practices, such as



getting a relative who is newly arrived from the countryside a job through existing social networks, were just not being called upon. Should they wind up begging, their lack of extended family ties or their difficulty in building new social networks may make it more difficult for them to find their way off the streets and into another line of work. Further research is needed to explore this.

The implications for those lacking strong, extended family ties are significant:

- may be more likely to wind up on the streets;
- smaller network to call on – and more easily expended;
- family or friends might be of help in getting that job sweeping up or being a doorman; a lack of these contacts may contribute to the likelihood of resorting to work on the streets;
- maybe the individuals themselves are less adept socially/have more psychological problems/less initiative than disabled people who do not end up on the streets. Counselling should take this into account.

### ***Education, skills and work histories***

Although there is an assumption in the existing literature that those who beg lack the education, skills and work history needed to find alternative means of employment, in fact, among the group interviewed and surveyed for this study, a significant minority did have some education, skills training and work experience. As was true in many other areas, the issues were more complex and offered more possible points of intervention than anticipated.

In fact, it is encouraging to note that 55 per cent of those surveyed had had at least some education, and that within this group, some had fairly extensive educations. Some 13 per cent had completed primary school, six individuals had some secondary schooling and three individuals had completed secondary school.

Another 32 per cent had some prior job training or apprenticeships, and 29 per cent of the total number of individuals surveyed had work experience in some craft or trade that might be transferable to an urban area. Also, 12 per cent of respondents reported having worked in agriculture, and while some of their skills (cattle herding, for example) may not immediately be transferable to urban areas, if the prospect of working in urban agricultural ventures (raising small animals such as chickens, tending small vegetable plots) are included, even this group may have skills that could be transferable to an urban area. More broadly, these individuals have a history of holding a job and contributing to the economic life of their households, whether or not their specific skills are immediately transferable to the urban environment.

However, 59 per cent reported no previous employment history and an additional 32 per cent stated they had lived on family support before starting to beg, although presumably many or most of these individuals had contributed to the economic life of their families, doing chores and working on farmsteads. Few poor rural families could afford to have any member not contributing at all to the work in the household or the farm. A number of these people reported that they “had worked hard for their families”. The

difference between women and men in employment history was particularly striking – 74 per cent of women had no previous formal employment history and had lived on family support, compared to 48.5 per cent of men.

Not only the education, skills and history of employment are of note, but also the clear interest expressed by many of the informants in finding another type of work. The vast majority, 94 per cent, reported they could not find other work despite trying regularly, but would like to find something else as long as it paid roughly the same amount as begging, as they needed to earn enough to live on. An important point is that the majority of people interviewed clearly stated that they did not prefer begging, but rather that the current alternatives to begging, such as selling lottery tickets, offered only small and irregular sources of funding. Also significantly, 20 per cent said they have themselves paid for skills training or education out of money collected from begging in the hope that this would help them find a better job.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that 80 per cent of those interviewed had begged for five years or more, so finding another type of job and keeping such a position over time may offer significant challenges.

Interestingly, almost 20 per cent held down other jobs such as selling lottery tickets, phone cards, or other small items on the side. Some who lived near a church which attracted pilgrims even resorted to renting out their own beds to pilgrims when it was possible to do so. In addition, although poverty and lack of agency limited the amount of economic decisions they could make on their own behalf, it is notable that roughly half of all informants did try to manage what resources they could by weekly or monthly contribution to Equib accounts (42 per cent) or burial societies (53 per cent), and a significant minority (31 per cent) both had an Equib account and belonged to a burial society, although most of these were able to put aside only a small amount (5-10 birr) on a weekly basis.

### **Poverty**

While policy-makers, members of the international aid community and members of the general public reported that those who beg bring in a good income, our interviews, focus groups and survey found that people with disabilities themselves indicate significant levels of poverty.

Overall, those interviewed and surveyed reported that they were very poor. On an “average day” 19 per cent collected less than 10 birr and only 23 per cent collected more than 20 birr or more. Even on an “exceptionally good day”, 85 per cent collected less than 30 birr; on a bad day 91 per cent collected 10 birr or less. Of those interviewed or surveyed, 77 per cent are not able to meet their daily expenses most days. Many regularly limit food, and 11 per cent said that on a bad day, they would cut back by walking rather than taking a bus or paying for a ride. Given the fact that 80 per cent of all those interviewed were either blind or had a significant physical disability, walking the possibly long distance to home through the crowded and deeply potholed streets of Addis Ababa is both difficult and dangerous.

Poor housing and limited material assets also reflected significant levels of poverty. Most have a house or at least a room to go home to – although 7 per cent did not. One man who had been injured while in the military

reported having slept on the streets for 12 years in his wheelchair (and before he was lucky enough to get a chair, on the ground). “When it rains,” he said, “I wrap myself in plastic bags. I live like a gorilla”.

Most respondents lived in extremely crowded conditions, despite the fact that housing routinely took over half of their incomes. The houses themselves appear to have limited amenities, and access to clean water and basic sanitation was also problematic. Some 52 per cent had no access to clean water within five minutes’ walk of their home, and 54 per cent no toilet facilities. Four per cent of the households surveyed lacked water, sanitation and electricity. The health and safety implications for limited access to clean water and basic sanitation in an urban slum neighbourhood for people – 80 per cent of whom have mobility or vision problems – is of additional concern (Groce et al., 2011).

An assessment of material assets further reflects this poverty. Many reported lacking such basics as blankets, beds and cooking utensils, and a cross-tabulation of a list of material assets found that only 1 per cent of those surveyed had all six assets specified, 81 per cent lacked two or more of these assets, and within this group 24 per cent owned only three assets (generally a blanket, water jug and cooking pot). Most reported that they were “poor” or “very poor” in comparison to their non-disabled neighbours.

Moreover, living with a disability means that there are additional costs. Five per cent reported that part of their income went on medical care or traditional health care related to their disability, and 5 per cent also reported that some of their income regularly went to assistive devices. However, what they seem to be going without is also notable. It was observed that many who needed assistive devices either did not have them or had devices that were in very poor condition. For example, several middle-aged blind men had white canes that they had been given years ago while students at the school for the blind. A number of people who needed wheelchairs did not have them, but those who did often had wheelchairs held together by tape or string. Such individuals did not list assistive devices as a current item in their household budgets, and thus the 5 per cent statistic may significantly under-represent what is actually needed.

## **Theme 2: Working as a beggar, daily routines and begging strategies**

Extensive discussion was held regarding begging as work. Of particular note is the fact that almost all informants were able to describe a strategy for begging which took considerable thought and planning, as well as significant amounts of time and energy. Beggars put in a long day. Most report showing up early, as it was felt that people would be more generous early in the mornings and get tired of giving later in the day; many stayed until sundown.

A number of individuals did not beg near where they lived, reporting that they did not want to be identified by their neighbours as beggars. In fact, several reported they took pains not to let the neighbours know what they did for a living, although most people said their neighbours knew anyhow. Others, particularly those with limited mobility, had less choice and begged in their own neighbourhood. In discussions, however, most agreed it was better to beg “away from home”. This means that considerable time is spent getting to and from the begging sites.

Much time is spent strategizing where to beg on a daily basis. Key sites for begging are places of worship. Many informants reported they went to more than one spot – showing up at religious centres when services were being held, and then moving onto places where events or public gatherings are taking place. The Ethiopian tradition of inviting beggars who congregate outside a church or mosque to funerals and weddings is a steady source of food and money for many. Many beggars who routinely stay in one or only a few locations also have regular “clients”, usually people who live or work nearby, who recognize the individual beggar and every so often give them money or bring food or clothing for them.

Interestingly, while hotels and tourist spots were also identified, most beggars reported that tourists were not that generous and often erroneously assumed that there were some sort of support system or social security programme that would take care of their needs.

Traditionally, beggars also wove in and out of traffic, with those able to walk or hobble venturing into the street and blind beggars asking others to lead them to cars, trucks and buses. Because of the considerable risk of injury or death, as well as the increased traffic congestion that this caused, several months before the start of this study in 2010 a campaign went into effect banning begging in traffic. While this was widely hailed as a new policy that had “stopped street begging”, in fact the initiative was primarily intended to address safety issues, as well as to ease the flow of traffic by moving beggars back onto the sidewalks. Within several months, beggars were again moving into the traffic, so the campaign seems to have been largely ineffective.

In the eyes of the general public, a hierarchy of giving seems to exist, with women accompanied by children (whether non-disabled or disabled) being given priority, followed by individuals with visible disabilities. Despite this, competition among beggars proved problematic for many. Disabled beggars often find themselves at a disadvantage in crowds of beggars, reporting that able-bodied beggars routinely push past them or stand in front of them to receive alms. Many are simply not as quick or as strong as non-disabled beggars.

Many also complained that non-disabled beggars pretend to have a disability to get money. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first time that disabled beggars themselves have been asked what they think of non-disabled people begging. A number were surprisingly sympathetic about non-disabled persons who begged, telling the researcher that those who beg must also have had hard lives. However, the majority of disabled beggars interviewed were adamantly against beggars faking a disability in order to beg, feeling that they were taking money away that was by right theirs.

Interestingly, a number of disabled beggars mentioned that people disabled by leprosy (Hansen’s Disease) were misrepresenting themselves as disabled beggars. With the increased availability of drugs to eliminate the disease, few in Ethiopia today have active leprosy, although many adults have been disabled by leprosy prior to the availability of leprosy medication. As a group, people acquire leprosy from later childhood to young adulthood and thus often have the opportunity to get an education, job training and

have some employment history before the effects of the disease become obvious.

In an interview, the President of the Ex-Lepers Association was adamant that people who have had leprosy in Addis Ababa now all have access to medication, and there is a strong support system in place. “No one who has had leprosy should be begging”, according to the President – a response that was also found when interviewing other development experts and health advocates. However, a number of disabled beggars reported that well-to-do ex-leprosy people beg, collecting extra money on weekends or during religious festivals. According to disabled beggars interviewed, the ex-lepers were largely a middle-class group who own their own homes and businesses and show up to beg driving their own cars. That 13 per cent of all those selected at random on the streets of Addis Ababa for the survey reported having had leprosy came as a surprise, given the strong statements by both leaders in the ex-leprosy and development communities. The disabled beggars included in interviews and focus groups (none of them ex-lepers) did not consider ex-lepers to be disabled or in need. This group of “disabled beggars” would show markedly different demographic patterns to those of people who had been born disabled or acquired a disability in childhood or adolescence, and this has been taken into consideration in the data analysis for this study.

### ***Violence and abuse***

In general, the level of violence towards people with disabilities who begged was reported to be low, although most disabled beggars and all disabled women interviewed said they begged during daylight hours and returned home when it got dark, in part for safety reasons. However, 35 per cent reported that they had been harmed or threatened by strangers, drunks, police or security people, or others.

Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of all those surveyed had been robbed and 20 per cent of this larger group reported that they are robbed regularly. Robbery entailed someone grabbing their money, which is often collected in a bowl or cup, and running away, confident that the disabled beggar will not be able to run after them. Those who are blind report being robbed more regularly, perhaps because it is assumed they will be less able to identify the thief; however, those who are physically disabled report a higher degree of physical violence and assault. Those who are ex-lepers reported lower rates of robbery and assault, which may well reflect the fact that as a group, they beg as a second job, showing up only on weekends and holidays. Thus, they may be choosing to work shorter hours in less dangerous locations – in other words, they have the option to decide whether or not to beg and might not do so if they feel the time or situation is dangerous; those with other types of disabilities are poorer and may have no such choice.

None reported any form of sexual abuse. While this may be the case, it may also reflect hesitancy to discuss such subjects publicly, or social norms and beliefs that influence the reporting of such abuse. Certainly this finding is in direct contrast with a large and growing international literature which shows that people with disabilities are at increased risk of sexual abuse. At this point, all that can be said is that this issue warrants further research.

Unlike countries such as India, there was little indication of organized begging. While 35 per cent said they had heard of “businessmen” or others forcing or employing disabled beggars to work for them, most doubted if this story was true or thought it a rare practice. Indeed, when asked, every person told the same story of a disabled child purposely blinded and made to beg. This story appears to have been a news item in recent years and many became visibly upset in discussing it. If it happened, it is clear that maiming children to induce greater sympathy is not a routine practice in Ethiopia. The same is true of stories regarding stealing or renting children to help beggars – including disabled beggars – collect more money. The practice may exist, but many of the accounts may be “urban myth”.

### **Theme 3: Life beyond begging**

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is that 87 per cent of those interviewed and surveyed see a future beyond begging or feel that a different future is possible, although they may be unsure how to get there. Moreover, when asked to describe what they could do besides begging, most had very realistic ideas of what they would be able to do – small-scale trading, or crafts such as shoe repair and tailoring. When pressed about why they could not do this now, more than half (63 per cent) reported that they lacked the funds, education or training or “didn’t know where to start”. Notably, 20 per cent of all those surveyed reported spending money regularly on skills training or courses to improve their readiness for the workplace – such courses seem to be of short duration and feature basic skills such as improving reading skills or the ability to work with a sewing machine. The improvement of sewing skills is an excellent example of how the lack of basic equipment (the sewing machine itself) would block the ability to apply these skills, once acquired.

Significantly, a number of individuals interviewed reported that they had heard of jobs training courses offered by mainstream NGOs, but doubted that these courses accepted people with disabilities or at least assumed that people with disabilities would be less likely to be selected for such courses. Had these courses made specific mention of people with disabilities, or noted in their advertisements and flyers that people with disabilities were welcomed, several people specifically stated that they would have tried to sign up.

As most of these training courses did not provide fees for people to attend, people also felt they could not go without income collected through begging for long enough to take these courses. As one man said, “such courses are for people who can afford to go without money for food”.

In one focus group a blind man well into his 50s was receiving congratulations at the end of the session; it turned out upon further inquiry that he had recently been hired by a local music school to provide singing lessons. The job was a full-time one and would allow him an income of roughly 1,500 birr per month, well above what he had collected as a “singing blind beggar” over the past 20 years. He was confident that the job would turn out well, reporting that the position had occurred “by chance – the music school needed someone right away” and also added, “I will certainly try to keep the job. I am too old to keep begging”.

Significantly, none of those interviewed or surveyed wanted their own children – whether non-disabled or disabled – to beg. Despite some members of the public talking about “generations of disabled beggars”, this was not the case. Programmes and policies that seek to offer disabled beggars other income options must take into account the fact that most of these people are parents, and efforts to reach them must consider their plans and options for supporting their own children.

### ***Attitudes of people in the community (including other people with disabilities)***

Members of the general public as well as professionals felt unease towards many who begged, and this included disabled beggars. In discussion with members of the general public, many volunteered stories of beggars – including disabled beggars – who do very well for themselves. When asked how much they thought disabled beggars made on a daily basis, informants in government and development agencies estimated that they made from 100 to 150 birr a day. In fact, disabled beggars themselves reported making on average 20-30 birr on a good day.<sup>34</sup> A number of government officials and members of the general public also related a story about a disabled beggar, recently killed in a car crash, who was reputed to have had 60,000 birr (US\$6,000) found on him. The fact that the same story was told by a number of people may mean that this is either local folklore or had been broadcast on radio or TV. While it could be true, it does not seem to be representative of the group interviewed for this study.

Several members of the general public and a number of development workers also reported that some disabled men use their collections to buy drink or khat<sup>35</sup> and that as evening falls these men become increasingly belligerent, both to other beggars and to members of the public. A few of the disabled beggars interviewed also volunteered this information, consistently adding that those who drank or took drugs were a small minority of all disabled beggars. Those who raised this issue found the behaviour of these individuals both unacceptable and of concern, as they felt strongly that it reflected badly on disabled beggars in general.

### ***Links to DPOs and other disability advocacy efforts***

A point of interest – and of concern – is that programmes for people with disabilities through government agencies, NGOs and DPOs rarely seem to reach disabled beggars.

There are DPOs working throughout Ethiopia and the majority of them are based in Addis Ababa. These organizations, working on shoestring budgets, along with several NGOs offer some small-scale intervention programmes to teach skills, identify potential employment or provide micro-finance opportunities for people with disabilities. But the recipients of these programmes, disabled children and adults with disabilities who are unemployed or in school, while very poor, are not beggars. With very limited resources and many to serve, perhaps unsurprisingly, there had been little attention paid to disabled beggars. Indeed, in interviews for this study,

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<sup>34</sup>This would be equivalent to US\$1.18-1.77 per day. The global poverty line is US\$1.25 per day.

<sup>35</sup> Khat: the leaves of an Arabian shrub chewed or drunk as an infusion, as a stimulant (Oxford English Dictionary, 2011).

when questioned about disabled beggars, many NGO and DPO representatives stated that the mission of their organizations was to “keep people off the streets”.

A number of disability advocates admitted that they themselves felt a good deal of unease towards disabled beggars. As one local disability leader confided:

*I know they are there. I see them, especially on holy days; there is a line of people with disabilities begging at the traffic interchange near my door. There but for the grace of God go I – and I resent them. Having spent years advocating for dignity, equality and self-sufficiency, it sets the movement back. It's embarrassing.*

Other members of the disability community were more sympathetic. “They need to get enough money to live some way,” one said. Another said, “they should be returned home to their villages”. But the majority of disability leaders and advocates interviewed during the course of this study closed the interviews by saying: “we should be doing more”.

There is a lack of contact between disabled beggars and DPOs and NGOs. Some 43 per cent had heard about government or NGO efforts to provide services, resources or build skills for people with disabilities, but few had benefited from any programmes. For example, a number of beggars knew that a local organization for the blind offers a training course to help blind individuals learn how to better navigate the urban environment (which given the lack of safe sidewalks, huge pot holes and general confusion on the streets would be a particularly helpful skill). But because of their great poverty, all who volunteered this information stated that they themselves were unable to take time away from begging to take the course.

Little was known about local disability advocacy efforts or the disability rights movement at either the national or international level. Only 7 per cent had heard about organizations run by and for people with disabilities (DPOs), and several were visibly surprised to learn that such organizations existed. There was little knowledge about new laws in Ethiopia intended to improve the lives of, or provide rights for, people with disabilities and only 18 per cent had heard about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, all reporting the same source – a recent programme on local radio. While a number of informants expressed interest in knowing more about DPOs and the new laws, none thought that the government laws, DPOs or the new convention would do much for them. As one disabled female beggar said: “what rights do I have in a place like this?”



## CHAPTER 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Perhaps the most striking finding from this study is the diversity of the experiences and needs of this group of disabled beggars who, from the outside, look so similar. This diversity offers a number of points for interventions which could both keep many from becoming beggars in the first place and also offer others viable options to leave the streets and earn a living that could provide them a more secure life with dignity and self-determination. Some of the key findings of the study are outlined below.

- **People with all types of disabilities are not equally represented: the majority of those begging are blind or physically disabled.**

The majority of people with disabilities found begging had either vision or physical impairments (80 per cent). While people with all types of disabilities will need intervention and support to work their way out of poverty, targeted programmes to help individuals who are visually impaired or physically impaired would serve a significant proportion of all those now working as beggars.

- **The issue of urban/rural migration is a key concern in identifying who within the larger disability community may end up begging, and there are significant subgroups within this population that can be effectively targeted and helped.**

The majority of people with disabilities who now beg come from outside Addis Ababa and fall into four groups:

### a. **Impoverished rural/urban disabled migrants**

Those who come to Addis Ababa as disabled people fleeing stigma and poverty or seeking a better life in the capital. For these individuals, a critical point of intervention would be working with families, schools and community leaders in their home communities to address prejudice, ensure educational opportunities and build skills that would enable young people with disabilities to support themselves and their families. International agencies, government, NGOs and DPOs could all play a role. Such efforts would keep these disabled people from feeling they had little choice but to leave for the city.

### b. **Medical migrants**

People with disabilities who come from rural areas to seek medical care often have families who have expended their last funds to send them to the hospitals in Addis Ababa. If needed medical care and rehabilitative services could be delivered in regional clinical centres closer to home, many would not need to travel to the capital. For others, there will continue to be the need to come to Addis Ababa to receive more advanced medical or surgical care. But if such care were better coordinated with local rural clinics and health centres, people with disabilities who need such care would arrive with realistic expectations of what clinical care could and could not do.

Travel costs are another issue. Treatment for people with complicated disability-related problems is free in many hospitals in Addis Ababa, or provided at reduced costs because of international funding, government grants or other charitable efforts. A small amount of this funding might

be allocated to ensuring that transportation is available to get these “medical migrants” home after treatment. Finally, NGOs and DPOs might work with hospital centres to provide information and support – including information on disability rights – to many of these people with disabilities while they are in Addis Ababa for treatment.

These measures would help ensure that people with disabilities do not arrive in Addis Ababa with unrealistic expectations, that their families have not impoverished themselves in sending them as a last-ditch hope that more advanced care would eliminate an already present disability, and that the people with disabilities involved would not find themselves stranded without the money to travel home or deciding not to travel home to face relatives who unrealistically expect them to come home “cured.”

**c. Educational migrants**

Children and young people with disabilities who come for special education but leave before finishing their degrees need support, guidance, mentorship and training in marketable skills. It is argued here that schools have an ongoing obligation to these children even if they choose to leave before completing their degree. Schools would do well to build stronger partnerships with DPOs and NGOs serving disabled populations in order to provide mentorship programmes and support for older children and adolescents who leave school early, so that they do not wind up on the streets. This is currently a missed opportunity that could reach some of the most vulnerable young people with disabilities.

**d. Newly-disabled adults**

Those who come to Addis Ababa as young men and women to find work, and become disabled after arriving, may be reached and helped at several junctures:

Improved safety regulations on the job may keep many from becoming disabled in the first place, and this is an important point for intervention.

For those who do become disabled through injury, support and advice on living with a disability, as well as employment training and links to disability advocacy groups at critical points during their treatment, would allow them to make informed decisions, help them build better lives and keep many off the streets. The course of treatment for this group was distinct from that of other disabled beggars and of note because the lack of intervention here represents a significant missed opportunity. Many of those interviewed had spent two to three years or longer in hospitals and long-term care centres after becoming disabled. The majority of this group have had at least some education, skills training and a history of employment prior to the time of their injury.

If they could be linked to programmes that allow them to acquire new skills to support themselves, as well as to DPOs and NGOs to gain an understanding of their options, opportunities and rights as newly-disabled adults, begging might not be the only avenue they see open to them.

DPOs and NGOs working on disability issues could also help with the training of clinical and rehabilitative staff in medical and long-term care centres, which are already doing good work in providing care for newly-disabled children and adults. Staff interviewed at these facilities expressed interest in learning more about living with a disability and how

to build bridges between DPOs and NGOs which provide services to people with disabilities.

- **Lack of education and skills are part of the problem – but in fact, a wide variety of education and skills was represented**

While it was assumed at the outset of this study that disabled beggars would be largely without education or skills, in fact the study revealed a more complex pattern. Almost one-third (32 per cent) of those interviewed or surveyed had had some prior job training, and 55 per cent had some literacy skills. A significant number had a considerable amount of work experience.

Many had thought about what they could do besides begging, with most of their ideas being very realistic. Many suggested, for example, that if only they could get a bit of capital together, and could manage the logistics, they could sell small items (lottery tickets, fruit and vegetables, etc.) or work at trades such as needlework or shoe repair.

Links with existing disability-specific or mainstream development and micro-credit efforts, even when efforts are made by these organizations to reach people with disabilities, do not seem to reach disabled beggars. Only a few individuals reported knowing that such opportunities even existed for people with disabilities, and these people were quick to volunteer the fact that they cannot take time away from begging to participate.

Targeted outreach efforts, with additional supports to take into account the social marginalization, psychological needs and other concerns that might be specific to those who have worked as beggars, are needed. Of note is the fact that 80 per cent of all those surveyed had worked as beggars for five years or more, so bringing them back into the workforce may require more effort, specific support systems and other types of targeted programmes. More research on this is required.

- **Limited or brittle social networks**

A consistent finding was that of the relatively limited social network reported by those interviewed and surveyed. While the majority of the disabled beggars have children and spouses or partners, there was a notable lack of connection with extended family, neighbours or even others who beg. This may be both a cause and consequence of becoming a disabled beggar. Lack of strong friendship networks and extended family ties may push some people with disabilities onto the streets to beg, while others with similar types of disabilities and more extensive networks (stronger friendship circles or family support networks) may be able to avoid begging. Whatever the nature of the initial driving factors, once on the streets the people interviewed reported becoming further isolated from family and friends, with whom they are ashamed to keep in touch, further limiting networks that could help them find other work.

Here, DPOs and the wider disability advocacy networks may play a leading role in supporting and including disabled beggars, helping them to build and strengthen social connections that would help bring them out of poverty and keep them in the job market.

- **Poverty and the need for employment**

Most disabled beggars in this study lived in dire poverty and had begged on the streets for a number of years. Almost all report living in very poor housing and the majority lacked access to clean water and basic sanitation, lacked sufficient daily food and had little or no access to medical care. The small amount of money and lack of consistency in collections results in a hand-to-mouth existence. The inclusion of disabled beggars in both disability-specific and disability-inclusive development programmes to improve housing, water and sanitation, food security and access to medical care would be a significant step forward.

Equitable social protection programmes for those in need, that effectively reach people with disabilities in both rural and urban areas, would help keep many from turning to begging in the first place and need to be piloted and implemented.

But most important is the need for employment. The most consistent issue and concern among all those interviewed and surveyed who currently work as beggars is the need for realistic opportunities that would allow them an alternative course of income.

It is striking that 87 per cent of all the disabled beggars surveyed see a future for themselves beyond begging. They did not see begging as the “end of the road”, but few had practical ideas of how to move beyond begging. Notably, 20 per cent reported spending some money regularly on “education or finding another job”. Almost none wanted their own children (whether disabled or non-disabled) to beg. Despite the fact that in our literature review and in interviews with some experts in international development, there was discussion of “generations of disabled beggars”, this was not an issue encountered in Addis Ababa. Programmes and policies that seek to offer disabled beggars other income options must take into account the fact that most of these people are keenly interested in improving their options. It is also important to take into account the fact that a majority of those people with disabilities who beg are parents, and alternative job options must provide enough income not only to support the individual while they are being retrained, but also allow such individuals to provide for their families.

While all those who beg may need both disability-specific and disability-inclusive programmes to enter or re-enter the workforce, special attention should be given to women. Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of women had either no previous employment history or had been supported by their families prior to coming to the streets (compared to 48.5 per cent of men), so specific gender-based training and support should be considered for women new to the workforce.

- **Greater involvement of DPOs and NGOs**

The review undertaken as part of this project could identify only a handful of development projects or programmes that included disabled beggars. Of particular note is the almost complete absence of any attention to disabled beggars by DPOs, NGOs, government ministries and UN agencies charged with addressing disability and poverty issues. Many organizations see their missions as being to “keep people from begging”. They do not work with those who have already chosen to beg.

Outreach efforts by DPOs, NGOs, government ministries and UN agencies are needed. In Ethiopia, the number of beggars who were in regular touch with DPOs or who knew of any laws or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was strikingly small. DPOs could and should take the lead in ensuring that policies, programmes and campaigns for people with disabilities include disabled beggars. Additionally, DPOs should be funded and encouraged to work with government ministries, development agencies and civil society to inform disabled beggars about their legal rights and choices and to advocate on their behalf.

A good starting point might be for DPOs to reach out to disabled beggars. Time, transportation and physical limitations for many disabled beggars mean that they are not willing or able to come to DPO offices. Holding information sessions at places where disabled beggars gather, such as churches and mosques, as well as busy markets and stadiums would be a good place to start. Information on DPOs, disability rights and inclusive development could all be disseminated via the mass media: 46 per cent of all beggars reported living in households that had either a radio or television set.

## **Future research**

Programmes that address education, job training and employment for people with disabilities rarely include disabled beggars. Governments, NGOs and UN agencies charged with improving education and employment rates among disabled populations, and international agencies that work on livelihood and economic development schemes, do not collect data about these individuals – their numbers, the nature of their work, why they (and not other poor people with similar types of disabilities) come to beg, what their daily lives are like or what their long-term prospects or hopes for the future are. There is a host of questions not answerable at this point and on which further research is needed. These questions will be addressed in future by this research team, but other researchers are encouraged to also begin to address the following questions and collect longitudinal and cross-cultural data in pursuing research on this population.

- What happens to those who beg over the course of their lifetimes?
- Are the patterns tentatively identified in this survey also found in other countries? Why do some people with similar types of disabilities from similar social and economic circumstances beg while others do not?
- What circumstances allow some people with disabilities who work as beggars to find other forms of employment and leave begging? Why can some individuals take advantage of this and others cannot or do not?
- Are limited and brittle social networks a reflection of the abject poverty and social marginalization that begging brings about, or are they the reason why some people with disabilities (and not others) end up on the streets?
- For those who beg, what impact does type of disability, sex, difference in ethnic/minority background and other cross-cutting issues have on their ability to make a living?
- How do individuals with mental health impairments fare on the streets and what points of intervention are there that may be unique and most effective for this population?

- What of disabled children who beg? What of disabled elderly people? What of those disabled by HIV/AIDS?
- What is the opinion of government officials, as well as local, regional and international groups working on development issues concerning disabled beggars?
- What is the situation in countries where traditional begging has been linked with state-sponsored enterprises, such as selling lottery tickets?
- How do disabled beggars themselves interpret their own lives?
- How and when is begging considered a viable form of employment? Under what circumstances could it be argued that those who beg should see themselves as self-sufficient entrepreneurs?

## Concluding remarks

Currently, the lack of attention to disabled beggars as part of global disability efforts is striking. This lack of attention to disabled beggars may reflect the assumption that improved economic circumstances for all people with disabilities will eventually better the lives of even the poorest and most marginalized in a “trickle-down” manner.

But this may not be true. A rising tide does not always raise all boats equally. In fact, people with disabilities who beg may be at risk of further marginalization in a rapidly modernizing economy. With improving national levels of education and prosperity, there is a risk that those who beg will fall further behind both the general population and people with disabilities who are benefiting from education, social inclusion and growing prosperity that will increase their ability to participate in the emerging global marketplace.

The single most striking finding from this study is that as a group, those people with disabilities who beg on the street of Addis Ababa constitute a much more varied group than initially anticipated, with many having skills and a work history that can be built upon. Thus there is not only one, but a series of different points where organizations and advocacy groups could intervene to help keep people from turning to begging, or provide alternative sources of income for people who currently feel their only recourse is to beg. The situation may be approached not with one solution but with a continuum of solutions – many of which could be low-cost, low-tech and make use of already existing government, NGO and DPO programmes and outreach efforts.

Lack of attention to disabled beggars, even by programmes designed for the general disabled population, may also reflect the widely held belief that once someone has started to beg, their options are too limited to take another path. They have reached the “end of the line”. Yet people with disabilities who flee the countryside for an uncertain future in the city often display a great deal of courage in setting out. As this study has shown, many of those who beg show a great deal of drive, organizational skills and perseverance. They often have greater ability to adapt, learn and grow than we give them credit for. It is ironic that as we enter the 21st century, the most public face of disability worldwide continues to be begging. Certainly, in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is time we re-examine how to reach this large and largely overlooked population.

In Ethiopia today, a small but growing number of UN, NGO and DPO programmes provide education and jobs skills training to people with disabilities,

and in some cases, also provide targeted efforts to increase AIDS awareness and services, improve livelihoods, access to water and sanitation, and other development objectives. In addition, at the regional level, the government has established rehabilitation centres in seven regions and plans are underway to establish additional centres in regions currently without them. Centres that are already in operation were initially planned to provide services to those injured in the military but now provide services to people with different types of disabilities from the community. Such programmes currently concentrate on providing rehabilitation, but have not been expanded to include job training or skills building programmes. Those programmes that do provide job training, inclusive development or rehabilitative care are important, but these programmes are currently very small in scale. While programmes such as these are significant steps forward, such efforts will need to be expanded and made available beyond the urban areas if a substantial dent is to be made in the number of people with disabilities living in poverty.

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## Appendix A

The first phase of the search reviewed academic research through the following general databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, ISI Web Of Science, SCOPUS and MedSci, using the key words “disability”, “adult”, “begging”, “poverty” and “livelihood”. Journals that particularly focus on one of the central themes of our search: poverty, disability and development were next searched using keywords but also concepts related to our query human rights, legal status, and CBR in combination with our key concepts.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, the variety of groups and subgroups involved within the disability community itself, and the number of different professional fields, associations and societies that may be addressing this issue, in a second phase we focused on a range of secondary data sources, such as UN agencies, professional organizations, advocacy and interest groups that specialize in disability and/or development in developing countries. The intention was to identify policy documents, committee reports, white papers, campaigns, calls for action or any other materials that might indicate attention to this issue. Websites were searched for resources that refer directly to poverty of disabled adults using related concepts noted above.

To summarize our research, over the course of two months we reviewed 22 prominent journals in disability, poverty and international development, 14 UN websites, including all the prominent organizations involved with disability and development issues, and 22 websites run by leading DPOs and NGOs.



## Appendix B – Survey Tool

### Disabled Street Beggars – ILO study

Individual # \_\_\_\_\_

(Ages 18-60)

#### A - DEMOGRAPHICS

A 1. Sex                      a. Male    b. Female

---

A 2. Age

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| a. 18-25 | d. 46-55 |
| b. 26-35 | e. 56-60 |
| c. 36-45 | f. > 60  |

---

A 3. Where were you born?

- a. Here in this city
- b. Town/village nearby (nearer than 100 km/62 miles)
- c. Town/village far away (>100 km/62 miles)
- d. Rural area nearby (nearer than 100 km/62 miles)
- e. Rural area far away (>100 km/62 miles)

A 4. Type of disability

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| a. Physically disabled/difficulty in moving   | f. Ex-leprosy/leprosy    |
| b. Blind/difficulty seeing                    | g. Albino                |
| c. Deaf/difficulty hearing                    | h. Epilepsy              |
| d. Intellectually disabled/mental retardation | i. Multiple disabilities |
| e. Mental illness                             | j. Other                 |

A 5. When did you become disabled?

- |                           |                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Born with a disability | d. When in secondary school  |
| b. Before school age      | e. As an adult               |
| c. When in primary school | f. When I became old/elderly |

A 6. How did you become disabled?

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Born with a disability | d. Military/war/conflict |
| b. Illness                | e. Violence/non-conflict |
| c. Accident               | f. Other                 |

A 7. Are you:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| a. Single   | d. Separated                           |
| b. Married  | e. Not married but living with partner |
| c. Divorced | f. Widowed                             |

A 8. Do you have children?

- a. No      **(Skip to A 10)**                      b. Yes

A 9. If you have children, how many children do you have?

- a. 1      b. 2-3      c. 4-6      d. > 6

A 10. Why did you come to the city? (**Choose main reason if more than 1 apply**)

- a. Born in city
- b. Came with my family as a child or youth
- c. Came to seek work **before** I was disabled
- d. Came to go to school/attend a programme **for the disabled**
- e. Came to seek medical care/cure
- f. Came **after** I was disabled to seek work/no work at home
- g. Came because my family told me to leave because of disability
- h. Came because of conflict/famine/hard times back home
- i. Other:

## B – RESIDENCE

B 1. Do you: **(If e - streets/plastic sheeting - go to B 2, all others go to B 3)**

- a. Own your own house
- b. Rent a house
- c. Rent room in a house
- d. Rent bed in a room
- e. Sleep on streets/in plastic shelter on streets

B 2. If you are sleeping on the streets, how long (months/years?) have you been sleeping on the streets or in a plastic shelter? **(after this, skip to C 6)**

- a. <1 year
- b. 1 year
- c. 2-4 years
- d. 5 years
- e. 10 years
- f. >10 years
- g. From time to time/in between houses

B 3. Do you live:

- a. By yourself? **(If 'by yourself' skip to C 1)**
- b. With other people?

B 4. How many people are in your household (share the same kitchen)?

- a. 1
- b. 2-4
- c. 5-8
- d. > 8

B 5. Who do you share your house with?

- a. Friends
- b. Roommates
- c. Family **(If family, answer B 6)**

B 6. If you live with family, how are you related? **(Circle as many as apply)**

- a. Parents
- b. Husband/wife
- c. Children
- d. Cousin
- e. Brother/sister
- f. Non-married partner
- g. Aunt/uncle
- h. Other family members

## C – ASSET INVENTORY

C 1. Does the house where you live have:

- a. 1 room
- b. 2 rooms
- c. 3 rooms
- d. >3 rooms

C 2. Does your house have:

- a. Galvanized iron sheet/tin/tile roof
- b. Plastic sheet covering for roof
- c. Grass-roofed hut
- d. Other

C 3. Do you get your water at home from water pipe/sink/well:

- a. In the house
- b. Near house
- c. At distance from the house (>5 minutes)
- d. No water nearby

C 4. At your home, do you have access to a toilet or pit latrine?

- a. In house
- b. Near house
- c. Some distance from house (>5 minutes)
- d. No facilities nearby

C 5. Does your household have electricity?

- a. No
- b. Yes

C 6. Do you own: (circle as many as apply)

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. Cooking pots     | e. Change of clothes |
| b. Water jars/basin | f. Radio             |
| c. Blanket          | g. TV                |
| d. Bed              |                      |

C 7. How much do you pay for rent each month?

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| a. Stay for free | d. 100-150 birr |
| b. 1-50 birr     | e. 151-200 birr |
| c. 51-99 birr    | d. >200 birr    |

#### D. – EDUCATION

D 1. Level of education (If 'a-b' skip to D 4; if 'c-g' go to D 2)

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. No formal schooling – cannot read/write     | e. Some secondary school      |
| b. No formal school, but <b>can</b> read/write | f. Completed secondary school |
| c. Some primary school                         | g. Other (religious, etc.)    |
| d. Completed primary school                    |                               |

D 2. Why did you stop going to school?

- Completed course
- Could not afford to continue
- Became disabled and was told no further education was available
- Teacher/headmaster/school told me to leave because of disability
- School not accessible after I became disabled
- Teasing/bullying from other children because of my disability
- No access to transportation because of disability
- Other

D 3. If you left school after you became disabled, who decided you leave:

- |                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| a. I decided myself | c. Teacher/headmaster/school |
| b. My parents       | d. Other/don't know          |

D 4. Did you receive any training/skill building when you were younger – (in school/an apprenticeship/other)?

- No (If no, skip to E 1)
- Yes

D 5. In what did you receive training/apprenticeship?

- Trade/business
- Building trades (brick laying, electrical/welding/carpentry, etc.)
- Secretarial/office work
- Sewing/dressmaking/carpet making/embroidery
- Hairdressing/beauty
- Other

#### E – INCOME/EMPLOYMENT

E 1. How long have you worked as a beggar?

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| a. <1 year   | d. 5-10 years |
| b. 1-2 years | e. >10 years  |
| c. 3-4 years | f. >20 years  |

E 2. Why did you start begging? (Circle as many as apply)

- Born with a disability – could not find other work
- Became disabled – could find no other work
- Other work does not pay enough
- Other work is physically too demanding
- Other

E 3. How did you earn a living before you started begging?

- a. No previous work **(Skip to E 5)**
- b. Family support
- c. Agriculture/farm work
- d. Business/selling/trading
- e. Building/construction trades
- f. Factory work
- g. Government employment
- h. Secretarial/office work
- i. Housework
- j. Military
- k. Day labour
- l. Service sector
- m. Other

E 4. Why did you leave your previous job?

- a. Became disabled
- b. Job became too hard to continue because of my disability
- c. Came to city to seek medical care
- d. Quit to find better job
- e. Job ended/laid off

E 5. Do you do other jobs as well as beg to earn money?

- a. No **(If no, skip to E 9)**
- b. Yes

E 6. If you do earn money elsewhere what do you do?

- a. Selling small items– phone cards, food
- b. Sell lottery tickets
- c. Watch cars/stores/homes - keep eye on other places nearby
- d. Play music/sing
- e. Firewood/charcoal fetching and selling
- f. Other

E 7. If you earn money elsewhere – about how much of your income comes from this?

- a. Only a little bit
- b. About a quarter
- c. About half
- d. More than half
- e. Most of it

E 8: If you earn money elsewhere, do you prefer doing this to begging?

- 
- a. No
  - b. Yes
- 

E 9. Have you ever left work as a beggar to do something else and then came back to begging? If so, why did you come back? (If no, skip to E10)

- 
- a. Could not find any other way of making enough to live on
  - b. Work elsewhere does not pay as well as begging
  - c. Work elsewhere not regular enough/job ended
  - d. I like to beg/find this is the best job for me
  - e. Other

E 10. How do you use the money you earn? **(Circle as many as apply)**

- a. Food
- b. Rent
- c. Transportation
- d. Education/training to help find another job
- e. Medical care related to disability – hospitals/clinics
- f. Medical care – traditional – holy water, amulets, prayers etc.
- g. Disability-related expenses – wheelchair, prosthetics etc.
- h. Support/education for your children
- i. Other

- E 11. How much money do you earn in an **average** day?
- |               |               |                |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| a. 0-5 birr   | d. 16-20 birr | g. > 40 birr   |
| b. 6-10 birr  | e. 21-30 birr | h. Do not know |
| c. 11-15 birr | f. 31-40 birr |                |
- E 12. How much do you earn in an **average** month?
- |                      |                 |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. Less than 50 birr | d. 201-300 birr | g. > 600 birr   |
| b. 50-100 birr       | e. 301-400 birr | h > 900 birr    |
| c. 101- 200 birr     | f. > 400 birr   | i. > Don't know |
- E 13. How much can you earn on an **unusually good** day?
- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| a. 10-15 birr | d. 31-40 birr |
| b. 16-20 birr | e. > 40 birr  |
| c. 21-30 birr |               |
- E 14. How little do you earn on an **unusually bad** day?
- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| a. 0-5 birr   | d. 16-20 birr |
| b. 6-10 birr  | e. 21-30 birr |
| c. 11-15 birr | f. > 30 birr  |
- E 15. Do you earn enough money:
- To pay for daily expenses most days
  - To pay for daily expenses and have a bit left over
  - To not be able to pay for daily expenses some days
  - To not be able to pay for daily expenses **most** days
  - To never able to pay for all daily expenses
  - Other
- E 16. If a day is bad for begging, do you go without:
- Food
  - A place to sleep
  - Transportation/ride home
  - Have to borrow money from someone to eat/sleep/get home
  - Other
- E 17. Most days, how often do you eat?
- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| a. Not regularly | c. Twice a day       |
| b. Once a day    | d. Three times a day |
- E 18. Are you ever given things other than money when you beg?
- No
  - Yes – food
  - Yes – clothing or other small items
  - Yes – a place to stay for night
  - Yes – other material goods
- E 19. Who decides what the money you earn is spent on?
- I decide myself
  - My family/relatives decide for me
  - The people I live with (friends, landlord, housemates)
  - I give all my money to someone who organizes beggars in return for room/food/transportation to site where I can beg/pocket change
- E 20. If you have extra money – (money beyond what you need to pay immediate daily/regular expenses), do you:
- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. Buy extra food or clothing  | d. Drinks                 |
| b. Something you want that day | e. Never have extra money |
| c. Save it for later           |                           |

- E 21. Do you have Equib (Revolving Saving and Credit Scheme)
- No (go to E 23)
  - Yes
- E 22. How much you pay for Equib?
- 5-10 birr per week
  - 10-20 birr per week
  - 20-30 birr per week
  - >30 birr
- E 23. Do you belong to a burial society?
- No
  - Yes

**F – WORKING ROUTINE**

- F 1. Where do you beg? (**Circle as many as apply**)
- Near church/ mosque
  - Near office buildings
  - Market areas
  - Hotels/restaurants/stadiums
  - In the street/traffic circles
  - Other
- F 2. Proximity to home :
- Near where I live
  - Far from where I live
  - Both
- F 3. Why do you beg at that place?
- People are more likely to give at that place
  - Local merchants/neighbours do not chase me away
  - Police do not bother me there
  - It is safe to beg at that place
  - Other
- F 4. Is there anyone who tells you where you can and cannot beg?
- No (**If no, skip to F 6**)
  - Yes
- F 5. If it is not your choice alone, who tells you where you can beg?
- Other beggars, who have their own territories
  - Police/authorities who allow beggars only in certain areas
  - A business man/community leader who assigns certain beggars to specific areas
  - Gangster or individuals – unlawful business men
  - Other

**INTERACTION WITH OTHER BEGGARS**

- F 6. What is your relationship to other **disabled** beggars you meet?
- I never speak to other disabled beggars
  - We compete for territory/alms
  - We are polite but do not know each other well
  - We look out for each other but do not have strong bonds
  - Many of us know each other well and look out for each other
  - We have an organization/band – regularly talk/work together
- F 7. What is your relationship to **non-disabled** beggars?
- I never speak to them
  - We compete for territory/alms
  - We are polite but do not know each other well
  - We look out for each other but do not have strong bonds
  - Many of us know each other well and look out for each other
  - We have an organization/band – regularly talk/work together

- F 8. What do you think of people who are begging who are **not** disabled?
- They don't need to beg, they should be working
  - They often have hard lives and need the money
  - Do not have an opinion
- F 9. Sometimes, beggars have groups for mutual support. Is there anything like this here?
- No
  - Yes
  - Don't know
- F 10. Sometimes, businessman or leaders organize people with disabilities to be beggars. Is that the situation here?
- No **(If no, skip to G 1)**
  - Yes
- F 11. If there are businessman/leaders who organize disabled beggars, do they: **(check all that apply)**
- Tell people where they can and cannot work
  - Take money in exchange for transportation to begging site
  - Take money in exchange for a place to live/food
  - Take money in exchange for 'protection'
  - Other
- F 12. If there is a businessman/leader who organizes disabled beggars, can people who beg work on their own, or must they work for these people?
- No **(If no, skip to G 1)**
  - Yes
- F 13. If disabled beggars here must work for such people, how much of the money they collect must they give to them?
- Less than half
  - About half
  - Most of it
  - All of it, in exchange for room, board, protection. Pocket change
  - I am not sure

## **G – PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY**

- G 1. What do people in your family think about the fact that you beg?
- I am not in touch with people in my family
  - They do not know what work I do
  - They do not like me to beg, but I need the money
  - They know I am trying to help/they respect me for doing this
  - They do not care
- G 2. What do people in the community think about beggars? **(Check as many as apply)**
- We are lazy
  - Feel sorry/know that there is nothing else we can do
  - They think we make much more money than we really do
  - God has allotted this as our lot in life
  - By giving alms to us, they get into heaven, they fulfil religious obligations
  - Other
- G 3. Do you have children?
- No **(Go to H 1)**
  - Yes
- G 4. If you have children:
- Do they live with you
  - Live with family members
  - Live at school
  - At orphanage/in a programme
  - Grown and live on their own

G 5. If you have a child/children, do they help you beg?

- a. No **(Go to H 1)**
- b. Yes

G 6. If you have children who help you beg, do they:

- a. Help you all the time – every day/almost every day
- b. Help you sometimes
- c. Help you only after school/on school holidays
- d. Other

G 7. If you have children, but they do not help you beg, where are they?

- a. They are in school
- b. They are out of school and working
- c. They are also beggars who work on their own
- d. Other

**H – VIOLENCE AND BEGGING** (Intro: Some people who work as beggars report that they have been victims of violence while begging/because they are beggars)

H 1. Have you ever been threatened or physically harmed while begging?

- a. No **(Skip to H 3)**
- b. Yes

H 2. Who has threatened/harmed you?

- a. Strangers on the street (youths, drunks, etc.)
- b. Other people who are begging
- c. Police/security people
- d. Local merchants/others in neighbourhood
- e. Other

H 3. Have you ever been sexually abused while begging?

- a. No **(If no, go to H 5)**
- b. Yes

H 4. If you have been sexually abused, who did this?

- a. Stranger on the street (probe: man, youth, drunks, others)
- b. Other people who are begging
- c. Police/security people
- d. Local merchants/others in neighbourhood
- e. Other

H 5. Is robbery – people taking the money you earn, lottery tickets, other things you're trying to sell by running off with them, using threat or force – a problem?

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Frequently

H 6. In some places, it is said that non-disabled children are intentionally maimed to allow them to work as beggars, or injured or disabled children are further maimed, to make them better able to work as beggars. Have you ever heard of that happening?

- a. No **(If no, go to H 8)**
- b. Yes



H 7. If you have heard of people being maimed to make them better beggars, was this something you have:

- a. Heard people speak of, but doubt if it is true
- b. Have heard about but think it very rare
- c. Have met people who say it happened to them
- d. Had it happen to you
- e. Other

H 8. In some places, it is said that people borrow/rent/steal disabled children and use them on the streets when they beg, pretending to be the child's parent. Have you ever heard about that happening here?

- a. No
- b. Yes

H 9. In some places, beggars who are **not** disabled pretend to have a disability to get more money. Does this happen here:

- a. No
- b. Yes

### **I – FUTURE PLANS**

I 1. Do you think you will always work as a beggar?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Don't know

I 2. If you could do something else to make money, would you prefer it to begging?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Don't know

I 3. If you could do something else besides begging to support yourself, what would it be?

- a. Sell things on the street
- b. Have a small shop – selling things
- c. Work in an office/business
- d. Do housework
- e. Work in a factory/manufacturers
- f. Sewing/dressmaking/embroidery etc.
- g. Hairdressing/beauty parlour
- h. Wood/metalwork/shoe repair
- i. Music
- j. Other

I 4. Why can you not do this now ? (**Check all that apply**)

- a. Cannot get enough money together to start such a business
- b. Lack enough education/training
- c. Not sure how to start doing this
- d. Not physically strong enough/not well enough
- e. I earn more begging
- f. Do not know

I 5. Have you heard of any organizations that give help to disabled people?

- a. No (**If no, go to I 9**)
- b. Yes
- c. Don't know

I 6. What types of organizations have you heard about – (Have them give name(s) – Interviewer can put in right category)

- a. NGOs – (Blind/Deaf Societies, Oxfam, etc)
- b. DPOs – (organizations run by people with disabilities themselves)
- c. Religious societies or institutions
- d. Government programmes
- e. Medical programmes
- f. Individuals who give help to people with disabilities
- g. Other

I 7. Have you *yourself* been in contact with or received any help from these organizations?

- a. No **(If no, skip to I 9)**
- b. Yes

I 8. If you have been in contact with any societies that give help to people with disabilities, what happened?

- a. I went to them, but they could not help me
- b. They gave me food/clothing (not continuous)
- c. They gave medical care/wheelchair/cane (not continuous)
- d. I am in regular touch with them/they help me (on-going)
- e. They gave me information about services available

I 9. Have you ever heard about any new laws that are supposed to give more benefits or rights to people with disabilities?

- a. No **(If no, skip to I 11)**
- b. Yes

I 10. If you have heard about laws for people with disabilities, what do they do?

- a. Give rights to people with disabilities
- b. Give services to people with disabilities
- c. Don't know

I 11. Have you ever heard about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

- a. No **(If no, skip to J)**
- b. Yes

I 12. If you have heard of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, what does it do?

- a. Gives rights to disabled people
- b. Gives services to disabled people
- c. Allows disabled people equal access to all rights and services
- d. Don't know

## **J - MISSING INFORMATION**

What do you think is important for me to ask about your work as a beggar that I have not already asked you about/that I may have missed?

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