

HELPING ETHIOPIA'S POOREST GIRLS GET AN EDUCATION



Context

Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, after Nigeria, and has the fastest growing economy in east Africa. The economic development has had an impact on [poverty](#) reduction. World Bank figures show that in 2010 55.3% of Ethiopians lived in extreme poverty this has now fallen to 33.5%. During that time primary

school enrolment has quadrupled. However, while access to education has increased, learning outcomes and the quality of education have not kept pace with it. There are significant regional and gender disparities in basic educational proficiency and disabled children are less likely to attend primary school.

The problem

Although Ethiopia has made much progress in ensuring all children get an education, girls and disabled children still face huge barriers, particularly those in the very remote areas. Girls in particular face considerable barriers to achieving their potential. Many still have very poor attendance at primary school, so they perform badly in their exams and are unable to progress to secondary school. At secondary level, the language of teaching switches to English which is problematic as many children do not speak the language and the teachers themselves have poor English.

Teachers in these remote schools often lack adequate practical experience or subject knowledge. Their teaching skills are below the level needed to apply the active teaching methods required by Ethiopia's new curriculum or to truly engage the students. Schools are under-resourced, both in the equipment and books needed to teach effectively but also in basic facilities such as toilets. The lack of hygiene facilities means girls lack privacy on a day-to-day basis but particularly suffer during their periods. Bullying and harassment from teachers and boys can also be a problem, so girls choose to stay away.

Parents also keep their girls out of school for a number of reasons. Girls are needed to help with domestic chores or work so they can contribute to household expenses.

Parents prioritise the education of their sons over their daughters. [Early marriage](#) is still a huge problem in parts of the country, particularly with the poorest families, and organising an early marriage is often done to ease the burden on household expenses as the girl then becomes the husband's responsibility. In 2017, 14% of girls were married by age 15 and 40% married before 18 (UNICEF 2017). [Human trafficking](#) is a problem in Ethiopia and parents worry about the safety of their daughters when they're travelling long distances to get to school or when living away to attend school.

Project objectives

This project is part of the Department for International Development's (UKAID) [Girls' Education Challenge \(GEC\) programme](#). GEC is helping up to a million of the world's poorest girls improve their lives through quality education and in finding better ways of getting girls in to school. This is the second phase of the project and the emphasis is on preparing girls to transition through the education system, increasing their number of years in school. We will support 16,481 girls in 77 schools in the regions of Amhara and Oromia.

Our local partner

Organisation for Child Development and Transformation (CHADET) works to improve the lives of marginalised children in Ethiopia by providing access to quality education and improving livelihood opportunities. It aims to create access to basic services to the most vulnerable children in both the rural and urban areas of Ethiopia. To achieve this it works in the areas of education, child safeguarding, improvement of livelihood and research. CHADET was formed in 1995 and with over 20 years of experience, it has established itself as a well-respected, authoritative organisation among communities, partners, donor organisations and the government.

Our donor

The Department for International Development (UKAID) is our donor and this project is part of the Girls' Education Challenge, the largest worldwide project so far to address helping the world's poorest girls get an education.



Our activities

We are training and mentoring teachers to improve their teaching techniques and help them understand how to tailor lessons to the needs of girls at different stages of their education. We are developing high quality teaching resources, especially for higher levels of education, and creating resource centres for students. Girls with disabilities are helped with equipment to aid mobility and learning and the project aims to create more positive learning environments and attitudes towards disabled students in their schools. All these developments improve girls' motivation and commitment to attending school.

We are undertaking a number of activities that directly support girls through their transition from primary to secondary education. We are supporting them to prepare for national exams and meeting additional costs, such as accommodation, travel expenses or fees. Sexual and reproductive health education will prevent STIs and unwanted pregnancies. The project is supporting girls to identify and challenge the things that are causing them to drop out of school, to raise these issues with the boys in their schools and to work together to create positive change in their communities.

We are also supporting the girls with life skills that will enable them to more confidently embark on secondary education. For girls that do not want to continue education, we are working to improve their employability through vocational skills. Life skills training, such as developing self-confidence, critical thinking and collaboration is helping girls to have the confidence to speak up and challenge inequality.



in numbers

The second phase of our project in Ethiopia will:

- Reach **16,481** girls in **77** schools, including **30** secondary and **47** primary schools.
- Train **900** teachers.
- Set up **47** sanitary corners and distribute **56,400** packs of sanitary pads so girls can continue to attend school during their period.
- Set up **60** letter link boxes, two in each secondary school, so girls and boys can report safeguarding issues.
- Train **126** teachers in how to respond to reporting of safeguarding issues.
- Support **1,241** girls to enrol in vocational training.



In their words

Bezu's story

Bezu is a girl from a rural area inhabited by agricultural families. At 13, she escaped a planned abduction outside her school.

"When I was 13 I was finishing Grade 7. I didn't know but a marriage had been arranged for me by my parents, to a man. In this area families will arrange a marriage for their daughter, without her knowing, and then agree that the man can abduct the girl. It's cultural. It's because a girl would otherwise be resistant. Once you've been abducted you're his.

"The day of the abduction I was in school. While I was preparing to leave there were men waiting for me outside, ready to abduct me right in front of the school. They had paid a boy at the school 10 Birr (27p) to point me out to them. The Principal of the school heard about what was happening and found me and told me not to go out the front gate. He helped me escape out the back of the school.

"I ran home and asked my parents why they had done that. They said that he was rich, from town, and could look after me, so it was better that I accepted. I said, 'No, I don't want this, I want to continue my education!'

I tried to negotiate with my mother but she was very much in favour of the marriage. So I went back to the Principal and through him I ended up becoming a CHADET beneficiary. I wanted to finish my education and not be given as a wife to a man I didn't know.

"My parents kept insisting on the marriage, but I was very resistant. I kept telling them that if they tried to marry me I would run away, I would go to another country, anywhere. That made them listen to me a bit more. And by then, CHADET was making people aware of the issue. My parents were part of the Community Conversations that CHADET organised and they slowly started changing their minds.

"Eventually the marriage was terminated. At last I could focus on my schooling again. My parents are still part of Community Conversations and today I know that my father tells people how his daughter was rescued from early marriage. He tells them that if she hadn't been rescued, she'd be carrying a big burden on her back, and wouldn't be able to complete her education. He is really supportive now. They even tell me to study now!"

You can read more stories from ChildHope [here](#).