

# HEALTHIER FUTURES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ETHIOPIA

## COUNTRY FACTSHEET

Located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is a beautiful country dominated by mountains with peaks of 4,000m and higher. Ethiopia has one of the world's fastest-growing populations and is Africa's second most populous country, with the majority of people living in rural areas. Despite significant economic gains and improvements in access to essential services like health and education, the country still faces major challenges such as food insecurity, cyclical disasters, population pressure, unemployment, disease and natural resource degradation.

Though facing many challenges in its health and social care sectors, Ethiopia is a country full of promise and possibilities. Its health challenges mainly result from a weak health system that lacks the necessary staff and equipment to meet the needs of its predominantly poor and rural population. Limited access to health services and education, low levels of self-referral to community health services and high demand for reproductive health services, outstrips the availability of local health systems to deliver quality reproductive health services. These are ongoing challenges facing women and families in Ethiopia. In addition, the lack of access to contraception and family planning services, gender inequality, and harmful traditional practices have led to many deaths and injuries due to unsafe abortion.

### Ethiopia facts and statistics

- Population: 96.5 million.<sup>1</sup>
- Main exports: coffee, hides, oilseeds, beeswax and sugarcane.<sup>2</sup>
- Just under a third of the population lives below the national poverty line.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost 6 in 10 abortions performed in Ethiopia are unsafe.<sup>4</sup>
- 44% of the population is younger than 15 years old.<sup>5</sup>
- One in seven women die from pregnancy-related causes, and unsafe abortion causes more than half of the 20,000 maternal deaths that occur annually.<sup>6</sup>



This project will improve lives in Gamogofa, Wolayta and Segen Zones.

### Starting out in life

Receiving an education remains out of reach for many young people in Ethiopia, especially those living in remote communities. Many schools are a long distance from communities. Because families cannot afford to pay for transport, often the only option is to walk which can be too tiring or dangerous for young children.

For poor families living in rural areas, earning an income by working on the land is essential for survival, so many young people stay at home to look after crops or animals. Also, whilst education is free, families struggle to afford the essentials their children need to participate in schooling, like uniforms, books and pencils.

**With so many barriers to getting to school, children do not have the opportunity to improve their future prospects through education, even though this is what their parents wish for.**

Many young women do not receive an education, which limits their employment prospects. Therefore, marrying early and starting a family at a young age is common.



Photo: Christian Aid/M Gonzalez-Noda

You will be helping women and mothers by supporting this work.

Ethiopia has some of the world's highest rates of maternal, neonatal and child mortality. Teenage girls are particularly vulnerable to unplanned pregnancy, multiple pregnancies and pregnancy-related complications, which can be fatal in many cases. With an increasing birth rate, Ethiopia's population is not set to decrease any time soon.

### Limited prospects for women

Men and women have very defined roles in Ethiopia; women are generally responsible for domestic work and looking after the children, while men provide for their family and manage the finances. This impacts the younger generation as boys are sent to school while girls are kept at home to help with domestic chores.

Though women make up more than half the population in Ethiopia, they are not given the opportunity to an equal share of the country's economy.

**Women have limited prospects and more than 40% of girls marry before the age of 14 when they are still children themselves.**

This means women are not able to achieve financial independence and instead become totally dependent on their husbands or male relatives. This dependency leads to a lack of power and control over their lives – the defining factor of poverty. Nationally, more than half

of women report having no say in decision making at household level and domestic violence is a huge issue.

### Christian Aid in Ethiopia

Christian Aid has worked in Ethiopia for more than 30 years, initially responding to emergencies, but gradually building a long-term development programme. We work with local partners to deliver programmes that bring about lasting change for vulnerable and marginalised people. We want our work to result in thriving, resilient and equitable communities where people and their livelihoods are resilient, and where previously disadvantaged individuals and communities feel able to influence decisions affecting their lives.



Photo: Christian Aid/M Gonzalez-Noda

This project will give Ethiopian women a voice in their community.

#### Endnotes

- 1 <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ethiopia-population/>
- 2 [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349399](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349399)
- 3 [www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/ethiopia](http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/ethiopia)
- 4 [www.genderhealth.org/files/uploads/change/publications/CHANGE\\_Progress\\_Series\\_EthiopiaF.pdf](http://www.genderhealth.org/files/uploads/change/publications/CHANGE_Progress_Series_EthiopiaF.pdf)
- 5 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRH/Resources/376374-1303736328719/Ethiopia41411web.pdf>
- 6 [www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Not%20Yet%20Rain%20Factsheets/NYR%20Ethiopia%20Facts.pdf.ashx](http://www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Not%20Yet%20Rain%20Factsheets/NYR%20Ethiopia%20Facts.pdf.ashx)



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