

Statement by Beressa

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at this forum, not about the things that I have learnt in school but instead about the things that I have learned from my life experiences.

I do not know how I am going to explain to you how horrific life on the street is. It cannot be with mere words. You have heard how terrible it is from the others.

I was born in Addis Ababa. When I was 11 years old my father married another wife, I fought with him and ran away onto the street.

I became a big 'duriye' (trouble-maker) around the stadium area. We used to fight in groups (gangs). We would smoke, we would chew (chat). There was nothing that we would not do.

There were numerous people who tried to help us. It was an NGO that took me out of the street where I had spent three whole years. These people began teaching a few of us children, however we did not lose our street-child behaviour. When they would buy us exercise books we would sell them and buy cigarettes and chat. A little while later some of the children who in our group slipped out and went back to living on the street.

I realized that the life I had been leading was very bad, and so I decided to continue with my education. I have stayed strong with my schooling and I have reached where I am today. When I reached the 11th grade I was told that I was too old and I had to leave the organization. At the present moment I am going to school and living private.

I have a good desire for the future. I see a better chapter in life.

Thank you.