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## Overview and Background

Ethiopia, the “cradle of mankind,” is one of the oldest locations for human life. It is the second most populous country in Africa and has been experiencing strong economic growth, averaging 10.3 per cent per year over the past decade, making it one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.

Despite this progress, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world, due both to rapid population growth and a low socio-economic starting base. The country faces enormous challenges to realize equitable service provision. In addition, internal conflict and several years of insufficient rainfall has led to food insecurity, forced displacement, and disruption to education for millions. As the most vulnerable, children face the brunt of this burden.

### Education Situation

Over the past decade, Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in education, with primary school enrolment tripling between 2000 and 2017, and the youth literacy rate (for ages 15-24) improving from 49.9 per cent (2004) to 69.5 per cent (2015).

The country has put an extraordinary focus on building knowledge and skills of children and young people, especially since children make up 48 per cent of the population and will soon be leading the country. Recognising that children and youth comprise a massive population bulge and significant demographic dividend for the country, they have the opportunity to lift Ethiopia out of poverty and bring rapid economic growth. However, to ensure a highly skilled society in the next generations, children not only need access to education, but access to *quality*

education. If clear investments for quality education are not provided now, children will remain an untapped resource for the country.

Ethiopia’s education sector is complex and providing quality education is challenging due many factors, including:

- The low quality of education negatively affects children’s ability to achieve learning goals. Less than half of all primary students pass their end of year exams, directly impacting the country’s ability to achieve human capital development and employment targets.
- Pastoralists constitute a large proportion of the population, at 12 to 15 million people. Bringing education to pastoralists is challenging due to poor rural infrastructure and cultural livelihood patterns that make ‘stable’ education difficult for communities who travel on seasonal migration patterns.
- Girls face several challenges, where gender-based violence, early child marriage and other harmful social norms are barriers for girls’ participation in primary and secondary education.
- Ethiopia is the second largest host of refugees in Africa and the educational needs of these children place additional pressure on regions which already face challenges in delivering quality services to their own host populations.
- The country is prone to prolonged and multiple climate-induced and conflict-related emergencies that directly impact children’s access to education.
- Weak capacity of systems to deliver quality services and encourage accountability exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult to meet the basic educational needs of children.

## Situation



**48%**  
of approximately 105 million Ethiopians are children



**26.8 million**  
children enrolled in over 40,000 pre-primary, primary and secondary schools



**100** Net enrolment rate  
**88** Grade 5 completion rate  
**57** Grade 8 completion rate



**2.6 million**  
Primary school-aged children are out of school



**19%**  
of children in Grade 1 drop out of school



**40%**  
of girls are married as children and only 16% of secondary school-aged girls attend secondary school



**407,623**  
School-aged refugee children (ages 5-18) in Ethiopia



**1.39 million**  
Internally displaced school-aged children (ages 5-18) in Ethiopia

## Key Interventions

### 1. Early Learning and Development

UNICEF supports the revision of early childhood education (ECE) curriculum, development of quality service standards, and building of a political ECE roadmap to ensure age-appropriate quality teaching for young children so that learning is fun, engaging and educational. Efforts focus on improving parental involvement and demonstrating flexible cost-effective ECE methodologies in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

### 2. Access and Equity

Many out-of-school children in Ethiopia are from pastoralist, internally displaced or refugee communities. For pastoralists, UNICEF ensures school attendance by implementing the pastoralist education strategy and demonstrating innovative ways for school to be flexible and accessible. Refugees and internally displaced children are supported through school expansion and temporary learning spaces. UNICEF also engages in creating and delivering quality learning materials and building teacher capacity. Communications-for-Development 'C4D' community mobilization strategies are used to ensure local support for education.

### 3. Quality Learning

UNICEF is investing in an innovative Assessment for Learning (AfL) programme, which ensures capacity building of teachers for continuous assessment practices. Activity-Based Learning, a more child-friendly and inclusive teaching approach will be included within AfL to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. UNICEF supports the curriculum reform process that will bring quality changes to the content, delivery, and assessment of curriculum.

### 4. Girls' Education

UNICEF supports girls' empowerment by introducing life skills education in schools, strengthening school gender clubs to end school-related gender-based violence, and actively engaging communities in supporting the education of girls. UNICEF introduces C4D interventions to address harmful social norms, support girls' progression in school, and contribute to ending child marriage. Support is given to ensure gender-appropriate WASH facilities in primary schools and that gender equity is incorporated into all education programming.

### 5. Sector Planning and Management

Through research, evaluations, and institutional capacity building, UNICEF works to improve the education sector's capabilities for evidence-based and equity-focused policymaking, sector planning and strategy development. Technical assistance is provided to improve data for decision making, which involves the collection, analysis, dissemination and improved use of education data at national and regional levels.



UNICEF's field presence in Ethiopia. This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

## UNICEF Response and Impact

To invest in quality education, UNICEF starts early since the basis to a skilled society lies in the early years. UNICEF supports quality improvements to the Government's pre-primary classes, and develops flexible ECE methods for more hard-to-reach populations. To address the pervasive out-of-school problem, UNICEF strengthens girls' clubs and implements innovative programmes for pastoralist cultures that allow school to be flexible, while ensuring quality and relevancy to the cultures of each region. To improve the quality of primary education, UNICEF invests in teachers through Assessment-for-Learning, an initiative that gives teachers skills to continually assess the progress of individual students to inform their teaching. Given the considerable number of refugees and displaced communities in the country, investments are made in quality education to meet immediate humanitarian needs while seeking more sustainable solutions through integration with host communities.

Each component of the programme is implemented in close partnership with the Ministry of Education and other development partners. Through engagement within the Education Sector's pooled fund, the General Education Quality Improvement Programme, UNICEF is using its range of experience, knowledge, and influence to leverage larger investments and bring a greater impact to improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of Ethiopia's education system.

Through UNICEF's support, the following outcomes are expected.

1. Pre-primary aged children will have a good start and foundation to succeed in primary school, secondary school, and beyond.
2. There will be increased numbers of pastoralist, refugee and internally displaced children participating in quality primary education services.
3. Children will achieve learning benchmarks due to improved teacher and education staff capacity and accountability for delivering quality education.
4. More girls will have the opportunity to complete primary school, advance to secondary school, and gain the power to stand up for themselves and combat harmful social norms.
5. The capacity of Ethiopia's general education system will be enhanced in evidence-based and equity-focused sector planning and policy formulation at national and sub-national levels.

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