



## YOUTH PARTICIPATION



Children have the right to participate in decisions and activities that concern their lives. This is explicitly articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it was also strongly emphasized during the UN Special Session on Children in 2002.

UNICEF believes that child participation involves encouraging and enabling children and young people to be informed and make their views known on the issues that affect them. Adults need to take the time and the effort to listen to their concerns. Participation ensures the freedom of young people to express themselves and takes their views into account when coming to decisions that affect them.

Child participation must start with the children and young people themselves, on their own terms, in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns. Most of all, authentic and meaningful child participation requires a radical shift in adult thinking

and behaviour — from an exclusionary to an inclusionary approach to children and their capabilities.

Here in Ethiopia, children and young people are turning that principle into reality through initiatives like the Ethiopian Teenagers' Forum. These young people are making their voices heard on issues relevant to their lives, including HIV/AIDS, girls' education and poverty reduction. At each forum, participants reach consensus on ten action points to achieve change and improve the lives of their most vulnerable peers. These young people have proved that when they are involved, they can make a difference in the world around them. They are consistently showing us adults that they have ideas, experiences and insights that help us fulfil our obligations towards the realization of their rights.

It is UNICEF's firm belief that if we are to meet the goals of 'A World Fit for Children' and attain the Millennium Development Goals — if we are to make the world truly fit for all people — we will only do so with the full participation of children and young people.

Bjorn Ljungqvist  
Representative

## ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS CONDUCT CHILD-TO-CHILD SURVEY TO GET ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia** — Eleven-year-old Amir Mohamed sells chewing gum on the streets of Piazza so he can make ends meet for himself and his family. He had to drop out of school two years ago, because he couldn't afford the cost of 30 birr (less than \$4) he needed to pay every three months.

"I miss school, because I want to learn, but I didn't have the money to pay the monthly cost," said Amir, surrounded by three of his friends who are fellow petty traders.

Amir is one of more than 600 youth who took part in UNICEF's child-to-child survey. The Ethiopian survey is part of a global youth project to accelerate the enrolment of out-of-school girls and boys. An estimated 121 million children are not attending school worldwide. In Ethiopia, almost 5 million school age children are not in school, more than 3 million of whom are girls.

"We want this project to start a chain reaction, whereby the children and their teachers will not only identify those out of school but will also commit to getting them enrolled



# TOP THREE REASONS WHY CHILDREN ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

1. Cannot afford to pay school costs.
2. Lack school materials such as uniforms, text books, exercise books and stationary.
3. Have to do housework.

and helping them succeed,” said UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, who launched the campaign in Ethiopia on the Day of the African Child. “The chain reaction will go on to involve communities, parents, government ministries and external partners to achieve education for all.”

The survey was organised by members of the Ethiopian Teenagers’ Forum, which is part of the Global Movement for Children supported by UNICEF. Seventeen-year-old Zerihun Mammo attended the UN Special Session on Children on behalf of UNICEF Ethiopia and was one of the founding members of the forum.

“In New York, it was really amazing. I never thought children would have a voice like that. What I learned is that children have the solutions for their own problems often better than adults can,” said Zerihun. “We want everyone to hear what we feel so we can make a change in Ethiopia.”

Elleni Muluneh, 18, is another founding member of the forum who helped to organise the survey. “I talked to some kids who live on the streets and shine shoes. They drop out, because they can’t pay the costs,” she said. “They should have an education so they can have hope for their future.”

Many of the survey’s participants said it made them think for the first time about why other children are not fortunate enough to attend school, including poverty and losing a parent to HIV/AIDS. Eleven-year-old Sabida Tersen, a grade five student at Tibeb Menged Elementary School, said

the survey gave her a chance to write about her 10-year-old friend Zuwfan. “She can’t go to school, because she’s an orphan,” Sabida explains. “She was on the street for awhile. Now she’s working as a maid, and her employer won’t let her go to school. ... She wants so much to learn to write her own name.”

Ethiopia has been selected for UNICEF’s ‘25 by 2005’ campaign, an initiative to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education in 25 priority countries by the year 2005. Ethiopia has made tremendous strides in increasing school enrolment rates from 30 per cent in 1996 to 64.4 per cent today. However, there is still a 20.8-percentage point gap that separates the enrolment of boys and girls nationally. Eliminating gender disparities will help ensure that Ethiopia reaches the goal of education for all children by 2015.



“Development without education is hard,” said Zerihun. “Children who are not in school often end up on the street begging and that puts them in great danger.”

But the students realize that they can’t do it alone. The Government, UN agencies, NGOs and society as a whole must affirm their commitment to ensuring education for all of Ethiopia’s children.

“Adults make promises and don’t keep them. That’s why we don’t have change. They need to be models for the younger generation,” said Elleni. “When you don’t give a child an education, when you don’t give a teenager a voice, you are losing someone who makes the world a different and better place.”

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## INTERVIEW WITH BERHANE ADERE ETHIOPIAN LONG DISTANCE RUNNING CHAMPION AND UNICEF GOODWILL AMBASSADOR FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION



### ***What is it like to be a woman athlete in Ethiopia?***

*As women athletes, we are not regarded as any less than the men. We are equal to men. There are many advantages to being an athlete including appearing in international venues just like the men.*

### **Do you see yourself as a role model for young Ethiopian girls?**

Yes, I do see myself as a role model for Ethiopian girls. I was born and grew up in a rural setting. From there I went to school. I started from that level to get to the point where I am now, competing internationally and representing my country in world events. I believe that is a positive example for girls. The message I want to relate is that with hard work anything can be achieved.

### **How was education important for you, and how did it contribute to you being such a great athlete?**

I was in school when I was selected to participate in this sport. Being educated is very important for doing well in sports. If you don't know anything then it makes no sense to just be running. When you travel you have to read things, so being educated has been a great benefit to me. When vying for a world record, we are told what time we have to make to beat the record. We have to calculate these things. We are told that we have to cover a certain distance in a certain amount of time. If I were not educated, I would not be able to calculate my timing. I would just be running unguided. Therefore being educated has an important role in being successful. It does not mean anything to be running without an education.

### **How can participating in sports in school benefit girls?**

We were able to reach this level by first running at our schools. If girls engage in sports during their spare time, they will be able to reach a good place. Sports can provide an alternative from falling into a bad situation, spending their time idly and in unhealthy

activities. They can broaden their perspectives and develop good qualities. Participating in sports enhances the opportunities available to girls and contributes a great deal to our capacities as women. ... I believe participating in sports prepares you to take on anything.

### **Why are you helping UNICEF's efforts to promote girls' education?**

In Ethiopia, we women are regarded as being inferior, up to now that is. I started from an inferior position, and I have now reached the level where I am. Everyone can learn and work hard and stand before the world on an equal footing with men. I have agreed to work with UNICEF in order to achieve this – so that we can stand before the world as equal men and women.

### **What would you say to parents who are not sending their children to school, especially their daughters, to help convince them to send their children to school?**

My advice to parents is for them to encourage their children to go to school, to use the example of people who have come up from nothing and made it in life. They must encourage their children to work hard and do well. Girls are particularly vulnerable and can be easily hurt. If a girl is educated, however, she can protect herself from a lot of things. In our country we are going through a difficult time with HIV/AIDS. In order to protect themselves, those who are engaged in sport should continue to do that and those who are more academically inclined should focus on that. With an education they will have broader perspectives and will not be drawn to destructive behaviour. I would be very happy if everyone works hard and gets an education.

## NEWS FILE



**19 April** - The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) held a Mine Risk Education (MRE) training workshop for all MRE actors in Ethiopia from 19 to 23 April in Mekelle. Ethiopia continues to suffer from extensive landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination. Many of the mines and minefields are near populated areas and inflict casualties on both people and livestock. Mines pose dangers to resident populations, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and humanitarian relief efforts. The MRE workshop was intended to help protect communities in the mine-affected regions of Ethiopia and prevent more children and their families from being maimed or killed by these brutal weapons.

**24 April** - The Ministry of Health and the Child Survival Partnership, an alliance between WHO, The World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and UNICEF, held a three-day National Partnership Conference on Scaling Up Child Survival Interventions in Ethiopia. The Partnership is assisting Ethiopia to scale up child survival interventions to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing child mortality.

**11 May** - UNICEF funded the training of trainers (TOT) for more than 100 health professionals at three Ethiopian medical schools so that they can train their peers in the treatment and management of severely malnourished children. As of May, 41 nurses, 12 doctors and 54 medical interns were trained based on the national protocol at Addis Ababa, Gondar and Jimma Universities. Therapeutic feeding units (TFUs), which have been set up at the hospitals with UNICEF support including therapeutic feeding products and basic equipment, were used to give the participants practical hands-on experience dealing with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) cases.



**16 June** - UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy launched the Day of the African Child celebration on the theme of "Accelerating Efforts Towards Universal Primary Education" at the Ethiopian Teenagers' Forum in Africa Hall, ECA. In honour of the Day, UNICEF kicked-off a child-powered, global project to account for children not in school in order to accelerate the enrolment of all girls as well as boys. According to the survey conducted in Addis Ababa by the Teenagers' Forum, the top three reasons for children being out of school were inability to pay school costs, lacking school materials such as uniforms and text books and children having to do housework.



**23 June** - Over 720 girls aged 14-19 years from 62 high schools participated in the first Addis Ababa Girls' Forum addressing the vulnerability of secondary school girls to HIV/AIDS and laying the foundation for legislative intervention against sexual abuse. The one-day event was organized by the Addis Ababa Women's Affairs Office in collaboration with the Addis Ababa City Government Mayor's Office, Addis Ababa HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office, the Economic Commission for Africa's African Center for Gender and Development and UNICEF. The event marked the culmination of three weeks of discussion held in all ten sub-cities of Addis Ababa. This was followed by a two-day consultation between 100 representatives from the 62 schools with officials from the City Government, including the Mayor. Discussions centered on HIV/AIDS and communication, sexual harassment in and around school, sex education in schools, open dialogue regarding sex between parents and children and guidance and counseling services in schools.