



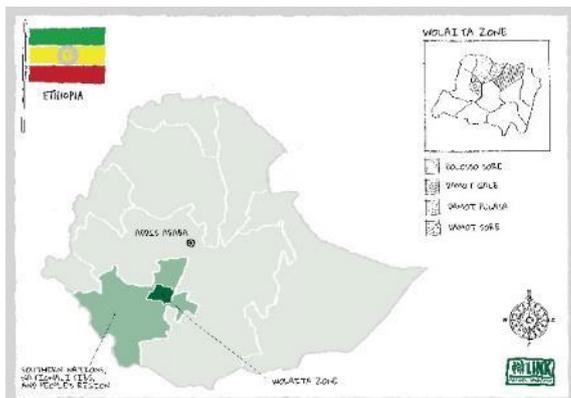
“My family was urging me to do household duties; these days, they want me to concentrate on my studies. This change has come around due to Link’s advice and counselling service” – Tagesech, Grade 7

Summary

Link Community Development is supporting marginalised rural communities in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPRS). We create innovative models to make government education policy meaningful at grassroots level, giving primary school learners the opportunity to achieve better results.

Having received funds from Irish Aid, UKAID, Open University Press, Boeing and Equitable Foundation, Link has impacted the learning outcomes of 97,809 children in 164 elementary schools across Rural Wolaita. Elements of Link Community Development Ethiopia’s work which constitute recognised best practice include: our unique School Performance Review cycle; Gender Action Plans and Social Accountability Monitoring in schools; and capacity building for parents, teachers, school managers and local education officials.

Background



Whilst Ethiopia has made progress in improving access to primary education, gender inequality and the quality of education remains a huge problem in rural areas, holding children and communities back from reaching their potential.

Ethiopia has a population of 93 million, of whom 66% live below the \$2 per day poverty line and 31%

below \$1 per day. In SNNPRS, the population has reached 15 million and many people live in absolute poverty.

Poverty levels are perpetuated by poor access to education and low quality of schooling - and a major barrier to improving learning outcomes is the lack of early years’ education. This shortfall of foundational skills contributes to poor performance, with only 46% able to complete primary education.

Girls experience further obstacles preventing them from accessing, progressing and completing primary education, particularly in rural areas. The barriers include early marriage, menstruation, domestic chores and wider societal attitudes to girls’ education.

KEY FACTS

- Link has been working in SNNPRS, Ethiopia since 2007 and has enhanced the learning experience of nearly 98,000 learners
- Link’s projects operate from the ‘inside-out’ using existing school and district systems
- We encourage local communities to actively engage in school planning and monitoring and hold schools accountable for the quality of teaching and learning
- Our projects are sustainable – we work closely with government at all levels and ensure our interventions align with government policy
- We take an iterative approach to programme design, responding to emerging learning and contextual needs
- In all districts where Link works, Primary Leaving Exam results in poor performing schools rise quickly

A snap shot of our projects

Life Skills and Literacy for Improved Girls' Learning in Rural Wolaita, 2014-2017

Link Community Development's Girls' Education Challenge project aims to **improve girls' enrolment, retention and performance in 123 elementary schools** across four woredas (districts) in Wolaita Zone of south-west Ethiopia. **The project has reached 62,777 girls** and addresses a wide variety of challenges girls face through holistic, low-cost, low-tech yet ambitious interventions. **The cost per girl is £15 per year.**

A key aspect of the project is raising community awareness of the standard of education their children are entitled to receive alongside opportunities for holding the schools and government accountable for providing that standard. We have far exceeded our targets in literacy, numeracy, attendance and retention outcomes. The interventions that are proving to have most impact are tutorial classes; gender responsive teaching; guidance and counselling for improved self-esteem; girls' clubs; reusable sanitary pads; underwear and soap; upgraded latrines; role models; and encouraging attitudinal and behavioral change within communities.



Ato Samuel Degu, a school director said *"for the first time in my experience as a Head Teacher and the first time in the history of Bade Woide girls have ranked 1st at all grade levels; [this] gives me so much happiness. I am also really happy that the extraordinary improved academic performance of female students is evidence that GEC interventions are working."*

Our early end line indicative results show that girls benefiting from our interventions feel significantly more confident, supported and equal at school, at home and in the community.

Language and Literacy in Rural Wolaita, 2015-2017

Our early grade reading project operates in 45 elementary schools in impoverished areas of SNNPRS, where population growth has placed enormous pressure on land for subsistence farming as well as on all social service provision. **We work in 45 schools** in marginalised, densely populated woredas of Wolaita, reaching **41,126 disadvantaged learners**. The project delivery approach is distinctive through its support of local delivery structures and its emphasis on capacity-building, engagement and dissemination with community members and policy-makers.

A core component of the project delivery is working within existing structures to generate relevant learning. Rather than taking a single approach such as building teachers' skills or stocking libraries or improving school administration, this project uses a multi-pronged, holistic approach that has students at its heart and includes teachers, school managers, government educational offices and the local community.

Activities for this project include intensive language training for all teachers, annual training and planning workshops for all head teachers, directors, experts and supervisors; provision of 'resource boxes' including 500 supplementary reading books per school in English, Amharic and Wolaitignya; annual reading open days to disseminate information to school stakeholders and the local community around current and target reading levels; and tutorial classes for 7,770 students. Our midline findings show a significant increase in Early Grade Reading Assessment scores for project learners.

Please see our Biennial review (2013-2015) and our Girls' Education Challenge midline report for more information

Delivery Partners



The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Education



Funding Partner

