

Hadush's story

A profile from Young Lives in Ethiopia



Hadush is 13. He is from a rural area and lives with his father, stepmother and three older siblings. His mother died when he was small and his father married again six years ago. He looks after cattle and is proud of his work. His family is poor but Hadush is positive about his life.

Hadush is a thin, shy boy. His clothes are a bit ragged. He doesn't attend school, although his sisters do. He attends a traditional religious school from time to time.

The family lives in a rural area of Tigray in the northern part of Ethiopia. Their home is in a compound. Inside there are three houses – the *hidmo*, *seqela* and the *adarash*. The *hidmo* (which means 'home') is a small room made of stone. The floor is made of earth, and its walls are rough. The *seqela* is a cattle pen. The *adarash* is a sleeping room with a traditional mattress on a bed made of mud. The family have a radio but no tables or chairs.



Hadush is interviewed in the fields, where he is looking after cattle with two friends, aged 10 and 12. This is his work and he is proud of it. He works around 10 hours a day. "I work to support my family. I like my work. I go to a traditional school sometimes at the house of our teacher who is a priest. We learn about such things as saying in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. I like the school."

Hadush's father talks about the different ages that children are expected to help in the household:

"When a child reaches 6 or 7 years old what can they do in the house?"

At 7 they can start school. They can also fetch water for the household and look after cattle like Hadush.

What about 12-year-olds?

A 12- or 13-year-old child can do everything – studying, cutting grass, herding cattle, weeding and cutting straw. By 12 he should be skilled at everything except ploughing, which he will learn when he is 16."



*"I am good at everything,
nothing is impossible for me."*



Hadush says he is happy at the moment because his older brother has returned from the army. "My brother arrived from the battlefield alive. He was not affected by the war. I was happy. He brought me all the things I asked him to, like a pair of shoes, a suit, sandals and slippers. People who live well have all these things – clothing, shoes, trousers, jackets, food, sheep, chicken, meat etc."

"What do you like?"

I like bananas, oranges, clothing and carrots.

What are the things which you consider to be challenging or difficult for you?

No, I do not have any difficulty. I am alright so far.

What activities are you good at?

I am good at everything, nothing is impossible for me."

Despite his poverty, Hadush is positive about his life. This is also true of other Young Lives children in Ethiopia. Although their households are poorer than average, they mostly have enough to eat. Many are enrolled in school although this doesn't mean that they attend regularly or even that they can read a simple sentence. Their welfare in terms of nutrition and enrolment in school is relatively good. Perhaps as a result, most Young Lives children are optimistic about their future well-being. This improvement may be linked to pro-poor government policies which have led to better education and health services and a general improvement in household income and children's nutrition.

Hadush's father thinks Hadush belongs to a lucky generation because children are freer to do what they want than previous generations. But other more pressing factors worry him. He is concerned about the harvest this year because he is still in debt from a bad year in 1995. If it is not a good harvest that debt will increase.



The role of religious schools in rural Ethiopia

Ethiopia's *kes timirt* – literally 'priest schools' – aim to prepare pupils, mainly boys, who are ready to continue their religious education and become priests in the future. Education was a function associated with the church in Ethiopia from its earliest days. According to one *kes timirt* teacher, children learn the alphabet and numbers but also receive religious education. Girls can, in principle, attend church schools to acquire basic literacy and numerical skills and get basic religious education, but rarely seem to. The schools do not follow a systematic approach to teaching.

A teacher in one of these traditional church schools said that classes are taught by a single teacher who hosts children in his own home, because there is no specific school building established for this purpose. Sometimes the teacher holds class outside in the open field. The teachers have no permanent salaries, so spend much of their time working on their own farms and allocate only limited time to the teaching. Various community representatives interviewed (such as elders, service providers and kebele officials) in one village also agreed that the traditional church education was not beneficial for the children of the community, especially in supporting their transition to primary school.

Source: Martin Woodhead, Patricia Ames, Uma Vennam, Workneh Abebe and Natalia Streuli (2009, forthcoming) *Access, Equity and Quality in Early Education and Transitions to Primary School: Evidence from Young Lives Research in Ethiopia, India and Peru*, Bernard van Leer Foundation Working Paper.



Country context: Ethiopia

Ethiopia remains one of the world's poorest countries, although progress has been made in recent years. Child mortality has fallen, access to health improved and advances have been made in primary education. The population of Ethiopia is 73.9 million.

Ethiopia ranks 169 out of 177 countries in the UN's Human Poverty Index.

- Life expectancy is only 51.8 years.
- 77.8% of all Ethiopians live on less than \$2 a day and 23% live on less than \$US1. There are large discrepancies between rural and urban people.
- Most of Ethiopia's children remain very poor and continue to live with 'not enough' in terms of household assets, food and goods, basic services and opportunities.
- One in every 13 children dies before reaching their first birthday, while one in every eight does not survive until they are 5 years old.
- Ethiopian children have high levels of malnutrition. Nearly one in two (47%) children under 5 are stunted (short for their age), 11% wasted (thin for their height), and 38% underweight.
- Literacy is low, at 31% for rural and 74% for urban residents.

Sources: Young Lives Round 2 Survey Report: Ethiopia; 2007/08 UN Human Development Report

A day in the life of Hadush

Time range	Activities (details of what you did yesterday)	How did you feel about this?
6.00am	I woke up alone, at home	
Between waking up and breakfast	I went to my sister's house and took the cattle out	
7.30am	I ate my breakfast at my sister's house	I like eating, I don't know why
8.00am–6.00pm	I went to the field to herd cattle with my friends and stayed there	I enjoy herding
1.00pm	I ate my lunch alone in the field	
2.30–5.00pm	Cutting grass in the field	
	I hate cutting grass because it is back-breaking work	
6.00pm	I came back home and was with friends	I enjoyed the game, it was nice
8.00–8.30pm	I rested with my brother at home	
8.30pm	I ate my dinner with my brother at home	
9.00pm–11.00pm	Played 'looking games' around home with my brother [the moon was bright]	I enjoyed the game, it was nice
11.00pm	I went to bed	

Young Lives is a unique long-term research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty. By following a group of children over 15 years, we aim to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty, and provide evidence to support the development of effective policies. We are working with 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. The story here is one of a set of twenty taken from the interviews our researchers did with the children individually and in groups. Each child's story has a theme of some kind that emerged from the material and which illustrates the issues that the children are having to contend with, but also gives a wider picture in relation to children's lives. This ranges from child work and education, to migration, health, domestic violence, inequality, gender, and individual circumstances such as being an orphan or being disabled.

The children and their families who are participating in Young Lives willing share with us a great deal of detailed personal information about their daily lives, and we have a responsibility to protect their confidentiality. For this reason, the children's names have been changed. The accompanying photos are of children living in similar communities in similar circumstances to the Young Lives children. Photo credit: © Young Lives / Aida Ashenafi.

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