

MARRIED AT THE AGE OF 8?!

DIFFICULTIES OF BEING AN ETHIOPIAN WOMAN

Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee, donkeys and camels, one of the oldest countries in the world and the place of 200 dialects and over 80 languages, yet not a single woman there can decide what her future will look like!

MARRIAGES

Can you imagine being married the age of 8? And meeting your husband at the altar while finding out he is five times older than you? You may not, but girls in Ethiopia certainly can. Every minute 28 girls in Ethiopia get married. It is not even their decision and they cannot do anything about it.

Marriages in Ethiopia are not really about love. It is all about money, respecting tradition and gain for everyone else but the newlyweds. Numerous women in Ethiopia are placed into arranged marriages when they are young. Many of them are exposed to harmful traditional practices like child marriage, female genital mutilation and polygamous marriage. As indicated by specific tribes, for example, the Oromo tribe, being married after the age of 16 is viewed as a taboo and carries disgrace to the young women and the family. In northern Ethiopia, the majority of people continue this tradition in order to secure their own and their children's futures, raise their family's status, avoid stigmatization, and prevent the disgrace of premarital sex.



Picture 1: Girls education

Source: <https://www.change.org/p/link-ethiopia-help-young-girls-in-ethiopia-recvie-the-education-they-deserve>

LEAVE NO WOMAN BEHIND

The Programme "Leave No Woman Behind" is an integrated programme aimed to empower women in the Amhara and Tigray regions (regions in Ethiopia). It has made a lot of progress. Here are some of the results:

- Reduced prevalence of child marriage
- Reduced prevalence of harmful tradition practices, including female genital cutting
- Increased access of voluntary counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS by the community
- Changing gender roles and division of labor of household chores and control of household assets
- Women empowered through literacy classes and more supportive of children to attend school

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN ETHIOPIA

Even though the women in Ethiopia are being neglected and badly treated, there are some who truly took a stand and made a difference.

Tirunesh Dibaba – the first woman to win Olympic gold medals in both the 5,000-metre and 10,000-metre races

Zemi Yenus - In a country where autism was considered a curse and autistic children were confined to a room, Zemi established the first autism center in Ethiopia

Amsale Gualu - the first female captain in Ethiopia and the sixth female pilot in the country

Meaza Ashenafi - Lawyer and Women's Rights Activist who established the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association.

Terrible things are happening to women in Ethiopia and they are finally taking a stand. They are trying to make a better world for them, as well as for the future generations and we should all help them reclaim what has been taken away from them.