

# Adolescent education and learning in Ethiopia

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## Acronyms list

EDHS	Ethiopia Demographic Health Survey
EDRI	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
GAGE	Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence
GER	Gross enrolment rate
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PTA	Parent–teacher association
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## Glossary

Kebele	Community or smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia.
Khat	The leaves of an Arabian shrub, which are chewed (or drunk as an infusion) as a stimulant. The plant is grown as a cash crop.
Shegoye	A form of traditional dancing that adolescent girls and boys participate in without adult supervision in eastern Oromia.
Woreda	District or third-level administrative division in Ethiopia (after zones and regions).



## Ethiopia: Education and learning

**Recommendation:** Support adolescent learning outcomes through social protection for the poorest, aligning school and agricultural calendars, and ensuring teachers are adequately resourced and trained in child- and disability-friendly teaching methods.



94% of young adolescent girls and boys surveyed want to attend secondary school and 61% want to attend post-secondary education



While mothers aspire for their adolescents to attend post-secondary education, sons are often favoured over daughters



In Afar, a pastoralist region, the average 11 year old has completed only 2.4 years of school – and only 2/3 are enrolled



Rural students' access to secondary school is limited – and many are unprepared to pass national-level exams

**“** When we go to their homes to bring students to school, there are some mothers who throw stones at us. They think the girls should help them in the house because they have no other support.” School principal in East Hararghe, Oromia, Ethiopia

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in expanding access to education over the past two decades. The budget allocated to education has doubled, and with greatly expanded primary school facilities and increasing parent and student commitment to education, the country is close to universal primary enrolment. However, significant hurdles remain. Dropout rates are high, with only about half of young people completing grade 5, and the enrolment rate in upper-secondary school still in single digits due to lagging investment in secondary schools. Rates are particularly low for girls, who face greater time poverty due to care and domestic work responsibilities. Moreover, learning outcomes are generally poor (especially in rural areas) and adolescents with disabilities have limited opportunities to realise their right to an education.

This report on adolescent education and learning is one of a series of short reports presenting findings from baseline mixed-methods research as part of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) longitudinal study (2015–2024). We focus on adolescents' perceptions of and experiences with accessing education and learning services in Ethiopia, paying particular attention to gender and regional differences, as well as those between adolescents with disabilities and those without. We also discuss the range of change strategies currently being implemented to fast-track social change, as well as the related gaps in the policy and programming landscape.

## Research methodology

In Ethiopia, our research sample involves a survey with more than 6,800 adolescent girls and boys from two cohorts aged 10–12 years (younger adolescents) and 15–17 years (older adolescents), and more in-depth qualitative research with 240 adolescents and their families. The baseline data was collected in selected sites in Afar, Amhara and Oromia regional states and Dire Dawa city administration during 2017 and 2018. The sample includes some of the most disadvantaged adolescents (adolescents with disabilities, married girls and adolescent mothers, adolescents from pastoralist and remote rural communities, adolescents from internally displaced households and child-headed households). Three subsequent rounds of data collection will be carried

out in 2019/2020, 2020/21 and 2022/23 with the younger cohort when they reach 12–14 years, 13–15 years and 15–17 years, and with the older cohort at 17–19 years, 18–20 years and 20–22 years. The main qualitative research will happen at the same junctures, but we will also undertake peer-to-peer and participatory research from late 2018/early 2019 onwards on an annual basis to explore peer networks and the experiences of the most marginalised adolescents in more depth.

## Key findings

- **Educational aspirations:** While there are marked differences between study sites due to context, overall, adolescents' educational aspirations are high. Our survey found that the majority want to attend post-secondary school, and both our qualitative and quantitative work found that many aspire to professional careers.
- **Parental support for education:** Parental support appears to be growing intergenerationally; most parents reported that formal education is important for their children's futures and that they aspire for their children to attend post-secondary education. However, there is some evidence that sons are still prioritised over daughters when it comes to education, with girls unable to devote as much time to studying as boys because of greater demands on their labour at home.
- **Educational access:** Adolescents – especially rural adolescents – face a number of hurdles in terms of their access to education. While nearly all adolescents (with the important exception of some pastoralist communities and adolescents with disabilities) had been enrolled in primary school, our qualitative work found that those most at risk of dropout are those that enrolled late. Poor attendance, driven by responsibilities for paid and unpaid work, can lead to having to repeat grades, which means that as young people enter adolescence, continued enrolment becomes more difficult in the upper-primary years. Hurdles are almost universally higher for girls, especially because they are at risk of being pushed or pulled into child marriage; but boys are also vulnerable as opportunities for paid work pull them out of school.
- **Quality of education:** Our qualitative study participants report that learning outcomes are low, particularly in





rural areas. Contributing factors include overcrowded, poorly resourced classrooms, teachers who do not have access to training on child-friendly pedagogies and instead rely on violent discipline to control student behaviour, and lack of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

- **Educational transitions:** Adolescents' transitions into secondary school are complicated by the reality that many rural students face long daily commutes or must board in town, as the scale-up of secondary schooling lags behind that of primary schooling. The draw of the cash economy further hinders transitions for both boys and girls. For girls, poor learning outcomes (driven by parents' demands on their time) and child marriage represent additional barriers to higher education.

## Change strategies

The government is working with donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement a wide variety of strategies, most of which have revolved around improving access to primary school and raising community awareness about the importance of education – especially for girls. Strategies targeting quality are overall less advanced in their implementation than those targeting access.

## Policy and programming implications

Our mixed-methods research findings point to a number of priorities for policy, programming and practice:

- **Support adolescents' educational aspirations:** Adolescents need to be exposed to both practical and aspirational futures – and provided adult guidance to think about the types of support they need to realise their aspirations. Our findings further highlight the value of young people being introduced to a variety of local role models, including those who have taken non-traditional pathways in terms of gender.
- **Intensify awareness-raising efforts – and education – aimed at parents:** Invest in messaging that simultaneously emphasises the importance of education and offers parents practical guidance on how parents can support their children's – and particularly their daughters' – education. Door-to-door efforts to ensure that children are attending school, carried out throughout the school year if necessary, should be paired with warnings and monetary or in-kind fines to ensure compliance.
- **Reconceptualise access to education:** Schools need to be staffed with decently remunerated, trained teachers, be adequately furnished and appropriately



resourced, including educational materials, school feeding, WASH facilities and specialised support for adolescents with disabilities. Expanding evening schools in urban areas and, over time, in rural areas, will also support adolescents who have to balance paid and unpaid work responsibilities to pursue further education. In Zone 5 (Afar), and remote rural communities in other regions, where distances keep many students from progressing, the government should consider aligning the school calendar to the agricultural calendar and at secondary level expanding free or heavily subsidised boarding schools.

- **Focus on learning outcomes:** Children's learning should be tracked from the earliest years – rather than simply measured via 8th grade exams given that failure at this juncture in adolescents' schooling can shut off entire pathways for future skills-building, and students should not be promoted before they have mastered content. Tutorials should also be provided to students who are regularly absent or at risk of falling behind to help them catch up, and offered at flexible hours that are matched to girls' schedules.
- **Teacher violence needs to be urgently addressed:** In the short-term, there should be an immediate end to punishment for 'mistakes' such as lateness and poor retention, which are often beyond students' – and

particularly girls' – control. Over time, teachers need to be trained in non-violent disciplinary approaches and robust monitoring and reporting systems put in place to hold teachers accountable to Ethiopia's policy against corporal punishment.

- **Student violence and harassment needs to be urgently addressed:** Awareness-raising to tackle bullying and sexual harassment, and communication and negotiation skills building needs to be integrated into the curriculum and reinforced through school clubs so as to promote non-violent communication and behaviour among students.
- **Target transitions:** Target students and parents with outreach efforts that emphasise growth and potential, and the longer-term advantages of secondary and post-secondary education. Ensure that students with disabilities are provided with the support that they need to stay in school as they transition into mainstream classroom, including through trained teaching assistants to support mainstream class teachers.
- **Support secondary education:** A multi-pronged package – including building more schools and providing economic and logistical support needs to be scaled up to meet demand, with care taken to prioritise girls' gender needs given the multiple disadvantages they face.

# Introduction

Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in expanding access to education over the past two decades (UNESCO, 2015). With policy commitments made tangible by increasing the share of the budget allocated to education, to 27% in 2013 (World Bank, 2018), the government has tripled the number of primary schools across the country (to nearly 35,000 in 2017). It has also seen the number of primary students climb from only 3 million to nearly 21 million over the past 20 years (MoE, 2017), and is closing in on universal primary enrolment. UNESCO (2018) reports that in 2015, the primary gross enrolment rate<sup>1</sup> (GER) was 102%<sup>2</sup> (97% for girls and 107% for boys). Research has found that parents' and students' commitment to education is growing as well. Driven partly by government messaging and partly by the pragmatic recognition that population growth combined with land degradation makes reliance on agriculture a risky proposition, education is increasingly seen as key to better life chances (Camfield, 2011; Feeny and Crivello, 2015; Loveday and Dom, 2016; Tafere, 2017; Jones et al., 2014a, 2016b,c, 2017).

However, significant hurdles remain if all Ethiopian adolescents are to access their right to a quality education. Dropout rates remain high, with only about half of young people reaching grade 5 and the enrolment rate in upper-secondary school (11th and 12th grades) still in single digits (MoE, 2017). This is partly due to the fact that the government's investment in building secondary schools still needs to catch up with primary schools. In addition, 'learning levels are poor and appear to have stalled in recent years' (RISE, 2018), especially for girls, who are often forced to miss school and forgo homework in order to do chores (Pankhurst et al., 2018; Bastian et al., 2013; MoFED and UN Ethiopia, 2012; Woldehanna et al., 2017; Woldehanna and Pankhurst, 2014). Children with disabilities remain especially likely to be denied their right to an education (MoE, 2017; Jones et al., 2018) (see also Box 6).

In terms of education and learning, the GAGE conceptual framework defines capable adolescents as having: (1) aspirations that include education; (2) caregiver support and resources to realise the right to education, including freedom from child labour, domestic and care work responsibilities that preclude access to learning opportunities; (3) access to affordable, age-appropriate, gender-responsive and quality educational and learning environments; and (4) support skills and resources to transition to secondary and post-secondary educational and learning pathways (see Figure 1). This report, which is part of a series of GAGE reports on adolescent capabilities through a gender lens (see Box 1), is organised accordingly. We pay particular attention to similarities and differences in the perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls and boys. Differences between research sites, and between adolescents with and without disabilities, are highlighted in text boxes.

The second half of the report looks at our findings on the change strategies currently being used by different stakeholders, from the micro to the macro level. We discuss which interventions are perceived by our research respondents to be effective, as well as shortcomings and key gaps identified. The report concludes by exploring policy implications of the baseline research.

## Conceptual framework

GAGE's conceptual framework takes a holistic approach that pays careful attention to the interconnectedness of what we call 'the 3 Cs': Capabilities, Change strategies and Contexts' in order to understand what works to support adolescent girls' development and empowerment – now and in the future (see Figure 1). This framing draws on the three components of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) approach to evaluation, which highlights the importance of outcomes, causal mechanisms and contexts – but we tailor it to the specific challenges of understanding what works in improving adolescent girls' and boys' capabilities.

1 The gross enrolment rate includes all students who are enrolled in school, regardless of whether they are 'over age'. The net enrolment rate includes only students who are enrolled at the expected grade for age. For example, a ten-year-old enrolled in first grade would be included in the gross enrolment rate, but not the net enrolment rate.

2 The net enrolment rate (NER) in 2015 was 85% – broken down to 82% for girls and 89% for boys (UNESCO, 2018).

### Box 1: Overview of GAGE and our baseline report series

GAGE is a unique longitudinal mixed methods research and impact evaluation study focused on exploring what works to support the development of adolescents' capabilities over the course of the second decade of life (10–19 years) as children transition from early adolescence through puberty and into early adulthood.

The far-reaching physical, cognitive, psycho-emotional, social and sexual transformations take place during the adolescent years – and especially following the onset of puberty – are considered second only to those experienced in infancy and early childhood in terms of their scope and speed. Given these pivotal life changes – and with a global adolescent population of more than 1.2 billion, the overwhelming majority of whom reside in the Global South – it is increasingly recognised by the development community that adolescence offers a unique window to accelerate progress against the effects of poverty, inequality and discrimination. By investing in young people there is an opportunity to reap a triple dividend for adolescents now, for their adult trajectories and for those of their children.

GAGE's starting point is that adolescent transitions shape both girls' and boys' lives, but often in highly gendered ways, due to the norms of their socio-cultural environments. These norms – especially around sexuality – start to become more rigidly enforced and more consequential in early adolescence, which forces girls' and boys' trajectories to diverge as they approach adulthood. To fast track social change, understanding this divergence is key.

This report is one of a series of short baseline reports focused on emerging mixed methods findings from the GAGE baseline. Based on the GAGE Conceptual Framework (see Figure 1), there will be a total of six reports focused on our baseline findings about adolescent boys' and girls' capabilities. These include (1) education and learning, (2) health, nutrition and sexual and reproductive health, (3) bodily integrity and freedom from violence, (4) psychosocial wellbeing, (5) voice and agency and (6) economic empowerment. This companion synthesis report summarises key findings and policy implications from a multidimensional capability lens.

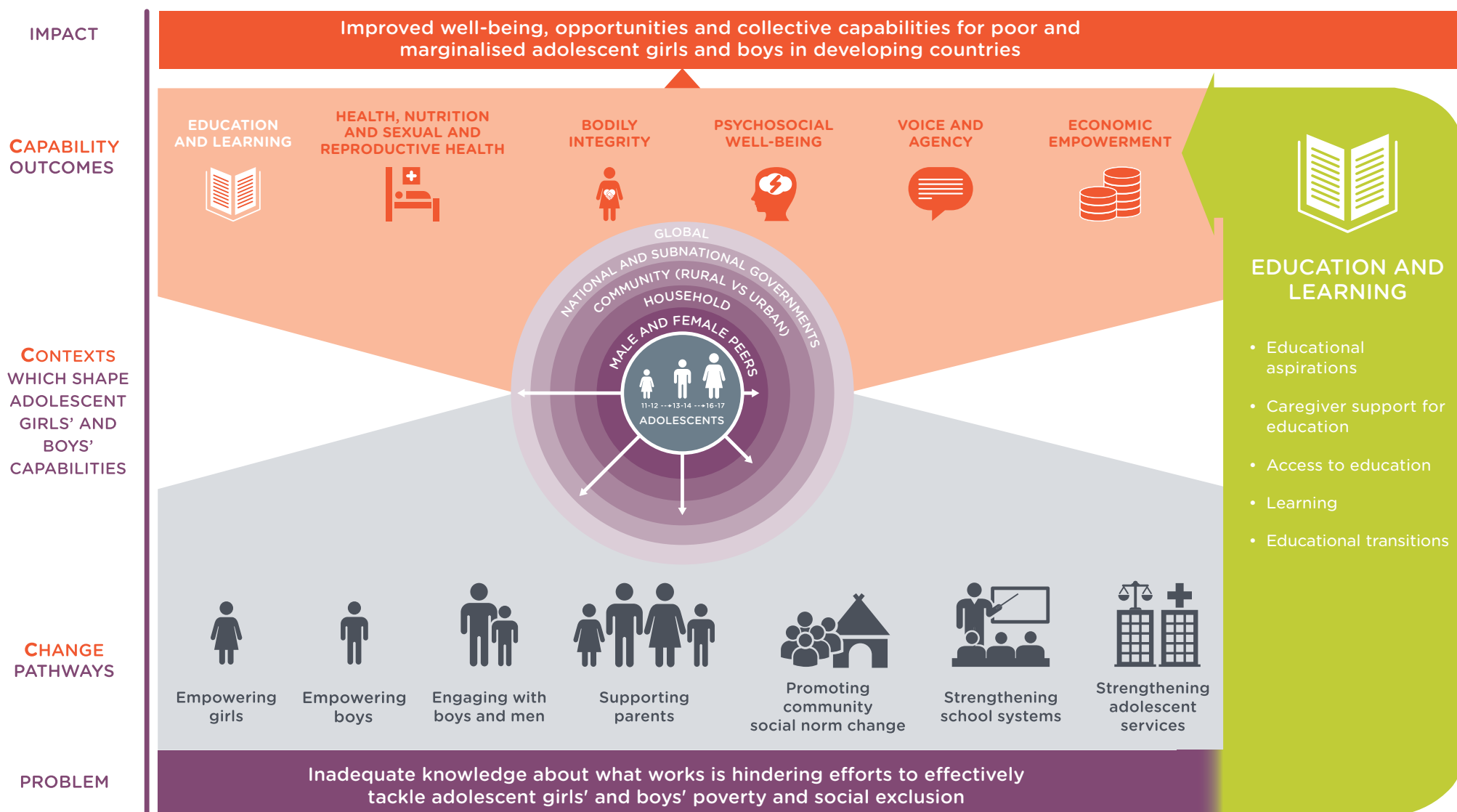
The first building block of our conceptual framework are capability outcomes. Championed originally by Amartya Sen (1984; 2004), and nuanced to better capture complex gender dynamics at intra-household and societal levels by Marta Nussbaum (2011) and Naila Kabeer (2003), the capabilities approach has evolved as a broad normative framework exploring the kinds of assets (economic, human, political, emotional and social) that expand the capacity of individuals to achieve valued ways of 'doing and being' (see Figure 1). Importantly, the approach can encompass relevant investments in girls and boys with diverse trajectories, including the most marginalised and 'hardest to reach' such as those who are disabled or are already mothers.

The second building block of our conceptual framework is context dependency. Our 3 Cs framework situates girls and boys ecologically, and that their capability outcomes are highly dependent on family or household, community, state and global contexts.

The third and final building block of our conceptual framework acknowledges that girls' and boys' contextual realities can be mediated by a range of change strategies including: empowering individual adolescents, supporting parents, engaging with men and boys, sensitising community leader, enhancing adolescent-responsive services and addressing system level deficits.



Figure 1: GAGE conceptual framework



Source: GAGE Consortium, 2019 forthcoming

# Research methodology

## Research questions

Stemming from our conceptual framework there are three core sets of questions at the heart of research, focusing on (1) adolescent experiences and the ways in which these are gendered and also differ by adolescents' economic, social and geographical positioning, (2) the ways in which programmes and services address adolescent vulnerabilities and support the development of their full capabilities, and (3) strengths and weaknesses of programme design and implementation in terms of ensuring programme efficacy, scale and sustainability. At baseline we are focusing on the first two questions and will explore the third question in more detail at mid-line and end-line.

## Mixed-methods approach

In order to explore these research questions GAGE is employing a longitudinal mixed-methods research approach. This baseline involved data collection in rural and urban sites in Ethiopia – totalling over 6,700 adolescent girls and boys, with a sub-sample of more in-depth qualitative research involving 220 adolescents, their families and communities. Our sample included two cohorts, the younger aged 10–12 years and the older aged 15–17 years (see more details in Tables 1–4) in Annex 2.

Our baseline quantitative and qualitative data was collected between late 2017 and early 2018. Going forward, the quantitative survey will entail two follow up rounds when the adolescents are 12–14 years and 14–16 years, and 17–19 years and 19–21 years, respectively. The main qualitative research will happen at the same junctures, but we are also undertaking annual peer-to-peer and participatory research annually (from late 2018/early 2019 onwards). See Annex 4 for more details on the research methodology.

## Research sites

Our research sample in Ethiopia involves adolescents from rural, urban and pastoralist communities from three regions: Afar, Amhara and Oromia. The sample also includes adolescents from Dire Dawa City Administration (see Annex 3 on research sites). Rural sites were selected to reflect economic and social vulnerability, as well as being informed by programme implementer capacities (see more

details in Annex 1). Urban sites were selected to capture emerging economic opportunities, variation in urban size and history, as well as to provide a point of comparison to rural sites on the basis of geographical and cultural proximity (see more details in Annex 2).

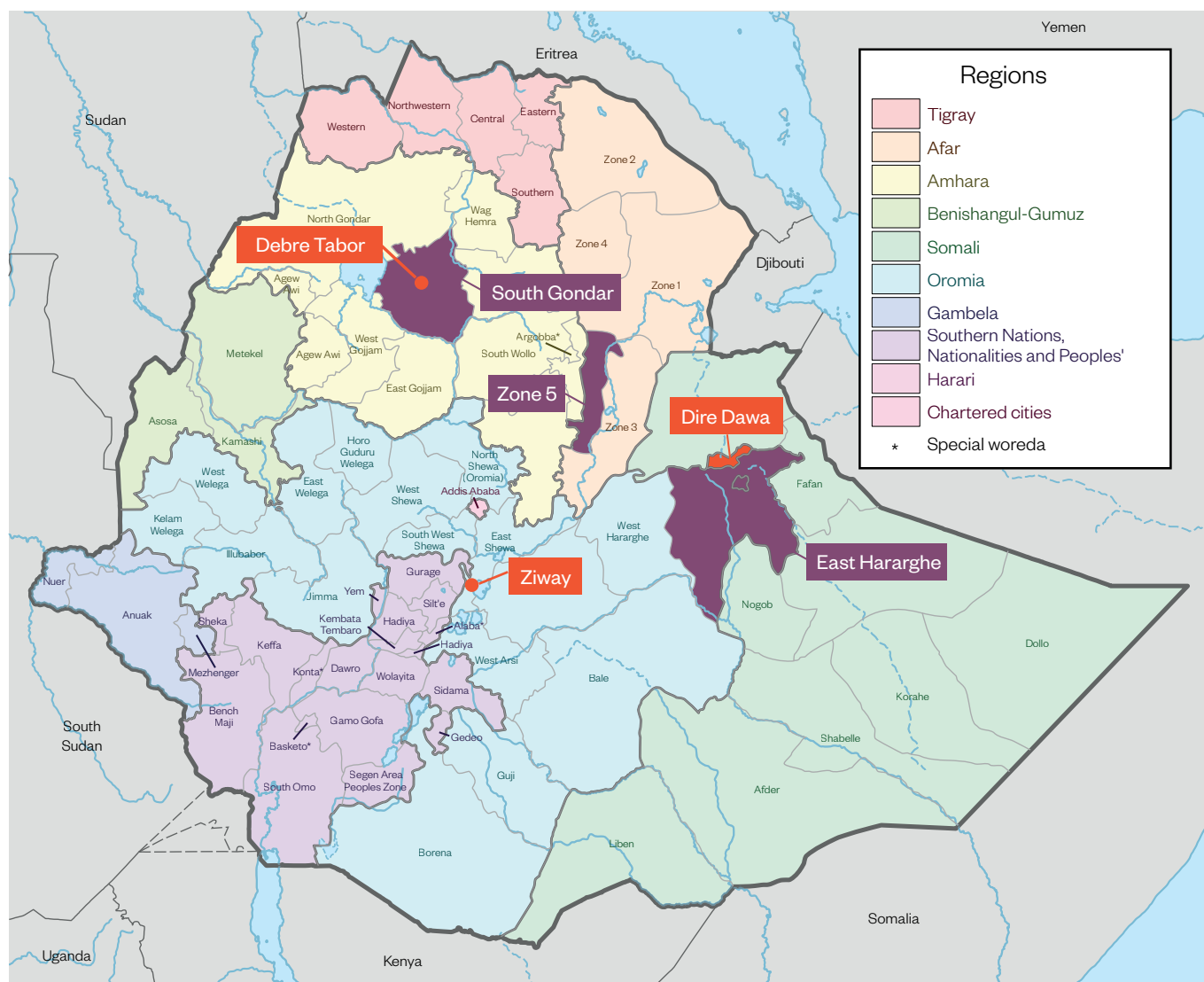
Given GAGE's strong focus on vulnerable cohorts of adolescents, in line with the 'leave no one behind' agenda, our sample includes adolescents who are especially disadvantaged, such as adolescents with disabilities, married, separated and divorced adolescent girls, adolescent mothers, and those from internally displaced communities. We included these adolescents in two ways: through a community listing process involving a random sample of adolescents of the requisite age, and through purposive sampling in an effort to overcome the stigma, discrimination and invisibility that such young people often face in their communities.

## Mixed-methods analysis

We employed an iterative analysis process, with the qualitative team attempting to make sense of the quantitative findings based on the narratives generated in the field and from the transcripts, and then the quantitative team delving further into disaggregating data to explore emerging patterns within and across sites. This was particularly important in the case of discussions on violence and harmful traditional practices, which are often highly sensitive issues to discuss and probe about. We recognise that for any of the six capability domains there are multiple areas we will be able to explore in further depth going forward; what we present here are key emerging findings, which we hope will lead to fruitful discussions with key policy and practice stakeholders, and provide motivation for additional mixed-methods exploration.

For the purpose of this series of reports, and given the large volume of qualitative data generated, we have focused primarily on interviews with the nodal adolescents to ensure that young people's voices are profiled, but also turn to key informant interviews to contextualise these findings. Future articles will draw on the additional data to complement the findings presented in this report and the other reports in the series.

Figure 2: Map of Ethiopia with research sites highlighted



Source: Originally created from File:Ethiopia adm location map.svg by User:NordNordWest and modified to show GAGE research sites.



# Baseline findings on adolescent education and learning

## Educational aspirations

Research has found that adolescent educational aspirations are overall quite high (Tafere et al., 2013; Camfield, 2011; Feeny and Crivello, 2015; Jones et al., 2014a, 2016c, 2017). Tafere (2017), using Young Lives data, found that at age 15, about three-quarters of young people would like to *complete* a university education. While the aspirations of most children tend to become less ambitious as they get older, Favara (2016), also using Young Lives data, found that childhood aspirations are predictive of the number of years of schooling eventually completed.

While noting that there are significant differences driven by context and gender (see Box 2 below), and also that most young adolescents do not yet fully understand the barriers they will face to reach secondary school – let alone post-secondary education – both our quantitative and qualitative research supports the notion that Ethiopian young people are aiming high. Overall, of the young adolescents involved in our research, nearly all (95%) would like to attend at least some secondary school and over three-fifths (61%) would like to attend university. Differences between our sample and the Young Lives sample are, however, quite marked, with Young Lives participants having higher educational aspirations at age 15 than our sample, even in early adolescence (roughly three-quarters wanting to complete secondary school versus roughly three-fifths wanting to attend tertiary education). This is probably due to the different samples used by the two studies. GAGE includes Afar, which is considered by the government to be an ‘emerging’ underserved region with low educational uptake, and has deliberately included communities within the sample in Amhara and Oromia that are very remote and have only recently been able to access formal education.

Our qualitative research also went beyond how long young people would like to stay in school and explored how they feel about education and what types of occupations they want to pursue. It found that most adolescents – at least those in South Gondar and East Hararghe – see education as the pathway to a successful future. A 10-year-old girl from Community L (East Hararghe) noted: *‘If I don’t attend school, I will become like blind person.’* Indeed, a

key informant from Community D (South Gondar) added that most adolescents are so committed to education that they do not stop to think about what schooling costs their parents: *‘They think education is their life and that it helps them grow. They don’t understand what a mother and father has to go through to provide for them.’*

While some of the adolescents involved in our research aspire to fame, many of those aspirations are media driven, such as becoming an *‘actress of films’* (12-year-old girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar) or a *‘star football player’* (17-year-old girl, Batu, East Shewa). Many of them have practical aspirations, such as driving cars to *‘transport stones, wood and people’* (11-year-old boy, Community J, East Hararghe), *‘getting in to agriculture to produce and harvest’* (11-year-old boy, Community G, South Gondar), or becoming *‘a police officer’* (10-year-old boy, Community G, South Gondar). However, most of the young people in our sample have professional aspirations. They want to become teachers, doctors, mechanical engineers, physicists, pilots and accountants. This is also the case for adolescents with disabilities (see Box 3).

The factors driving commitment to education and aspirations vary and, in many ways, reflect the fact that most adolescents in our sample are quite young. Several girls noted that education is simply required for an independent adulthood: *‘We need education for everything we do... because you can answer any questions that you are asked in a relaxed manner,’* explained an older girl from Community D (South Gondar). Most adolescents, however, believed that education is necessary to *‘get the opportunity to get a good job and earn a good income’* (12-year-old boy, Community A, Zone 5, Afar) and *‘not to be a farmer’* (11-year-old boy, Community L, East Hararghe) or have to *‘clean cow dung’* (10-year-old girl, Community H, East Hararghe).

Outside of the practical realities of larger salaries and avoiding manual labour, respondents mentioned that role models were important for inspiring adolescents. A teacher in Community L (East Hararghe), for example, noted that a local girl now studying information technology has encouraged a number of younger adolescents to take their schooling more seriously. She explained, *‘There are a*

**Box 2: Differences in aspirations by context**

Differences in aspirations among adolescents in different contexts were quite marked. Of the younger adolescents who completed our survey, nearly all of those living in South Gondar and East Hararghe wished to attend at least some secondary school (96% and 94% respectively), but in Zone 5 (Afar), only 84% wished to continue on to secondary school. In terms of aspirations to attend post-secondary education, differences were even larger, with 61% of those in South Gondar, 59% of those in East Hararghe, but only 37% of those in Zone 5 (Afar) wishing to pursue tertiary education.

In rural East Hararghe, the qualitative work found that many adolescents were not interested in formal education. Their goal was to attend school only until they were old enough to leave, usually in early adolescence when they are old enough to attend the *shegoye*\* dancing that increasingly drives child marriage (see also the companion report on bodily integrity). A health extension worker in Community I noted that, *'there is nothing that prevents them from learning, but they do not have interest and motivation for education'*. While a principal in Community K observed that the drought is compromising young people's commitment to education, as *'most of them are poor, the drought destroys what they have, and students have no interest to attend school'*, adolescents themselves allocated no blame to the drought. A 12-year-old girl in Community K (East Hararghe), when asked why she left school, reported: *'I have no convincing factor. I simply stopped it.'* Similarly, an in-school younger girl in Community H (East Hararghe), when asked why so many of her peers were out of school, explained, *'they prefer to sit than attending school and exerting effort'*.

In Zone 5 (Afar), adolescents' aspirations are shaped by a different reality. As we discuss in more detail below, many communities still have no schools, and pastoralist children have especially limited access to formal education and little exposure to role models. Notably, when asked why they wished to attend education, and what they wanted for their futures, young adolescents in Zone 5 (Afar) expressed aspirations that were more circumscribed than those of their counterparts in our other research sites. Boys wanted to *'have my own children, cattle and also to be a wealthier person'* (12-year-old boy, Community B, Zone 5, Afar) and girls – even those who wanted to *'learn up to grade 9 or 10'* – wanted to *'do house chores like cooking and collecting fuel wood'* (10-year-old girl, Community A, Zone 5, Afar). Indeed, a 12-year-old girl in Community B (Zone 5, Afar) struggled to understand our question, asking, *'What would I do except working at household chores?'* Overall, while adolescents in Zone 5 (Afar) reported wanting to complete secondary school, our qualitative work suggests that they have little understanding of what that actually means.

Urban–rural differences were especially notable. Of younger adolescents, 86% of those in urban areas versus 58% of those in rural areas wished to attend university. However, more urban adolescents (10%) compared to rural adolescents (3%) were likely to choose a skilled job in terms of their aspirations. Our qualitative work also found differences between adolescents in urban and rural areas. Namely, while adolescents everywhere wished to be teachers or doctors, those living in urban areas often had more detailed descriptions of their goals, such as wanting to *'carry out kidney transplants'* (10-year-old girl, Dire Dawa). Urban adolescents were also more likely to be able to explain how they had developed their particular aspirations – and to have a better understanding of what they needed in order to realise their goals. A 15-year-old girl in Debre Tabor (South Gondar), for example, reported: *'I started loving physics when I got to grade 7, I was very good at it. I love it because when you try to work out a calculation you might not get it right the first time so you have to do it repeatedly. This will be boring for most students but for me I have developed my work out skill.'*

\* *Shegoye* is a traditional dance that adolescents participate in in the evening without adult supervision. Involvement typically begins in early adolescence and in some communities is practised for extended periods of time. Adolescents often find a marriage partner through *shegoye*.

*number of outstanding girls who join college [and serve] as a role model.'* Several young people also noted that they wanted to be role models for their peers. A 12-year-old girl from Community A (Zone 5, Afar), for example, observed that she wanted to be a teacher because *'no female from my area has completed her education and become a teacher'*. A 17-year-old girl from Batu (East Shewa) added,

**Most of them are poor, the drought destroys what they have, and students have no interest to attend school.**

(Principal in Community K, East Hararghe, Ethiopia)

### Box 3: Aspiration and disability

Our research found that adolescents with disabilities also have high aspirations for their futures. A significant majority (85%) of the younger cohort would like to attend secondary school and over two-fifths (43%) would like to continue on to university. Indeed, of the adolescents with disabilities in our research who had access to special needs education, many – like their peers – wanted to be teachers or doctors, often to work with young people like themselves. A 17-year-old girl with a physical impairment in Debre Tabor explained, *‘I need to be a doctor. Especially I need to be a doctor to give support to those who are physically disabled. The sole agenda we have is education.’* While noting that access to education and parental support are key, the importance of aspirations to shaping adolescent educational outcomes was clear in the case of an older boy from Dire Dawa who is deaf. He explained that it was only after he had succeeded through his own efforts, that his family began to see him as capable: *‘In the previous times, there were disagreements between me and my family; they didn’t help me in doing my homework, they perceived that I couldn’t achieve anything. But, after I completed my college training – which was only due to my own efforts being with my friends – found a job and started to get a salary, they changed their mind and started to respect me.’*

*‘I can be a good example to others and also encourage them to work hard like me’.*

Adolescents also mentioned that they wanted professional careers in order to *‘support my parents’* (12-year-old girl, Community A, Zone 5, Afar), *‘educate my other relatives’* (15-year-old boy, Community A, Zone 5, Afar), *‘help the sick children and make them live’* (10-year-old girl, Dire Dawa), and *‘bring change’* to the country (girl, 16, Community D, South Gondar). An 11-year-old boy from Dire Dawa was clear that he saw pursuing education as part of his duty to Ethiopia: *‘I wish to become a medical doctor and I want to serve the Ethiopian people. I want to pay sacrifice for my nation.’*

**I wish to become a medical doctor  
and I want to serve the Ethiopian people.  
I want to pay sacrifice for my nation.**

(An 11-year-old boy, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia)

While our research found that adolescents have high aspirations, it also found reason for concern. Notably, some professions that require education (such as teaching) are less and less attractive to adolescents because salaries are significantly lower than those that can be earned by doing work that does not require an education beyond basic literacy, such as khat farming. Also, as we will explore in more detail in the companion report on economic empowerment, high youth unemployment means that many young people who have completed their education do not have a job. This leaves their younger peers to ask *‘What is the purpose of attending school?’* (key informant, Community J, East Hararghe). Indeed, older adolescent boys in Batu (East Shewa) observed that even an *‘engineer who graduated from a government university [was unable to find] any construction project’*, which was a source of considerable anxiety.

### Gender difference in aspirations

While evidence from Young Lives suggests that by the age of 15, girls’ aspirations are markedly lower than those of boys – with parents’ aspirations for their children largely responsible for gaps (Dercon and Singh, 2013; Favara, 2016) – our quantitative research found comparatively small (though still statistically significant) differences between girls’ and boys’ aspirations in our younger cohort. Of our 10–12-year-olds, 95% of boys and 94% of girls aspired to complete at least some secondary school and 63% and 60% respectively aspired to continue on to university education.

However, small differences at the aggregate level effectively hide the larger story, which is that in South Gondar, girls have higher aspirations than boys, and in East Hararghe, boys have higher aspirations than girls (and differences are not significant in Zone 5 (Afar)). In South Gondar, 97% of girls but only 95% of boys aspire to complete at least some secondary school (see Figure 3). In East Hararghe, 97% of boys aspire to complete at least some secondary school, compared to 91% of girls. Gaps in terms of aspirations for post-secondary education are even larger. In South Gondar, 65% of girls compared to 58% of boys would like to attend at least some tertiary education (see Figure 4). In East Hararghe, 66% of boys but 51% of girls would like to do the same. As we discuss below, these mixed gender patterns in East Hararghe and South Gondar are generally mirrored in the findings for other educational outcomes – namely, age at enrolment and highest grade attained, suggesting that tailored solutions that build on



**Figure 3: Percentage of GAGE younger cohort that would like to complete at least some secondary school, by region and sex**



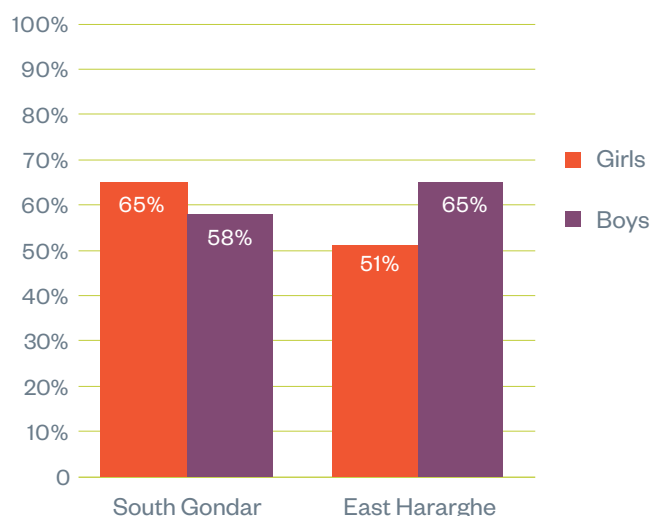
local strengths (such as Amhara's longer engagement with girls' education, more local role models and stronger NGO presence) and reflect local customs (such as East Hararghe's possibly more patriarchal traditions) are likely to be necessary to ensure gender-equitable outcomes in these diverse regional contexts.

Because most of GAGE's sample are young and have not yet begun to allow reality to mute their aspirations, our qualitative work generally suggests gender parity in terms of what adolescents would like to do with their lives. Girls and boys hold equally lofty dreams of professional careers – though their practical aspirations tend to be more gender-segregated (e.g. girls become health extension workers and boys drive taxis). The main observation that emerges from our qualitative work is that even when girls have high educational and occupational aspirations, they (unlike boys) often frame them around marriage. That is, as they report that they wish to be a doctor, they note that they do not wish to marry until they have finished their schooling and started their career: 'I want to get married after I finish my education and have a job. I want to get along on my own and finish my education first' (11-year-old girl, Community G, South Gondar).

## Caregiver support for education

Caregiver support for both girls' and boys' education has improved considerably over the last generation, as families increasingly recognise that education is helpful in preparing their children for paid employment and a more secure economic future (Jones et al., 2014a, 2016c, 2017; Brocklesby et al., 2010; Camfield, 2011; Kodama,

**Figure 4: Percentage of GAGE younger cohort that would like to complete at least some tertiary education, by region and sex**



2012; Smith et al., 2015; Tafere, 2017). Indeed, despite some significant context differences (see Box 4), our survey found that most female caregivers (67%), like most adolescents, aspire for their children to attend university – though we note that these stated aspirations are mostly not realised due to lack of parental support.

Our qualitative work found that caregivers' buy-in to education, at least in some locations, is improving annually. Adolescents reported that while their older siblings did not go to school, because their parents '*were not aware to send kids to school*', now younger siblings are not only enrolling, but more likely to do so on time (12-year-old girl, Community D, South Gondar). Several adult respondents observed that '*parents are also attending school together with their children*' (religious leader, Community J, East Hararghe) – because, in the words of a 10-year-old girl from Community H (East Hararghe) who was repeating what she had been told by her father, they understand that '*the fate of an uneducated person is like cattle*'.

Multiple factors have come together to increase parents' support for education. As well as policy and programming (see discussion in the 'change strategies' subsection below), parents have come to recognise that education is necessary for a non-agricultural future. As one man in Community C (South Gondar) noted, '*There is a severe shortage of farmland in our locality. A farming livelihood is no longer viable. Parents encourage their*

**The fate of an uneducated person is like cattle.**

(An 10-year-old girl, Community H, Ethiopia)

#### Box 4: Context differences in parental support

Jones et al. (2014a, 2016c, 2017) found that in Amhara, where population growth and land degradation have resulted in 'micro farms' that make even subsistence farming difficult (Bezu and Holden, 2014), parents are largely committed to schooling. In Afar, however, where many households are pastoralists, not only is parental commitment to education lower, but a recent drought has left many families unable to afford to educate their children (Jones et al., 2017). These contextual differences were also evident in our quantitative work and, as noted below, were often especially revealing when gender was also layered in. Our survey found that nearly all urban female caregivers (94%) want their children to attend post-secondary education, compared to only about two-thirds (64%) of their rural counterparts.

Our qualitative work explored why some parents are more committed to their children's education than others, finding that parents' educational background plays a key role. As a school principal from Debre Tabor noted, it is not surprising that urban parents tend to be more committed to education than rural parents: *'Urban families are educated so they understand the importance of education for their students.'*

Regional differences were also framed in this way. In rural Amhara, adults mentioned that in addition to the practical realities of shrinking agricultural plot sizes, the informal education that many parents received during the Derg regime has helped communities *'understand the importance... of education'* (teacher, Community F, South Gondar). Perhaps more importantly there has been a strong emphasis by the regional government in Amhara reflected in a high proportion of budget allocated to education. In rural Oromia, on the other hand, adolescents and adults emphasised the historical lack of education and how that reduces parental investment today, especially when combined with concerns that education is not sufficiently tailored to regional and local realities. As a young girl from Community H (East Hararghe) observed, *'The people are not educated here. They don't know the importance of education. They are teaching us because they are forced.'* A teacher in Community I (East Hararghe) added that parents *'want their children to follow their experiences'* – which for girls means marrying and having children in adolescence. In Zone 5 (Afar), where both formal education and religious education are comparatively new, parents' support for schooling is significantly more limited. While several adults mentioned that they are beginning to see how education might be useful, no adolescents noted significant parental engagement with their schooling – probably because the overwhelming majority of the community in our qualitative research sites were not literate.

*children to focus on education.'* A man in Community A (Zone 5, Afar) added that pastoralists in Afar are facing a similar realisation, as climate change becomes a reality: *'The size of our livestock decreased, so we understand the value of education as a means to have job opportunities for our children's future.'* Other families are supporting education because they see positive role models around them. A Youth League leader in Community G (South Gondar) noted that families are *'motivated to educate their children'* when they see graduates changing their own lives, and the lives of their families – e.g. buying better clothes and building better houses. Indeed, a 12-year-old girl in Community J (East Hararghe) reported that in her village, *'there is also competition among parents'* to see who can support their child's education to the highest level.

Adolescents highlighted that their success in school depends on several different types of parental support, but at a minimum, the need economic support to cover school fees, uniforms and school supplies. Given the broader context of widespread poverty in rural Ethiopia, most

parents appear to do their best. Adolescents spoke proudly of their *'red pens and attractive exercise books'* (12-year-old girl, Community L, East Hararghe) and acknowledged that their parents *'play a role in my prosperity by giving material support'* (11-year-old boy, Debre Tabor, South Gondar).

Adolescents also emphasised the importance of parents providing logistical support for education. For some, this means that their mothers are willing to *'wake up early in the morning and give me breakfast'* (12-year-old girl, Community L, East Hararghe). For others it means that their parents *'send us to school in order not to miss a single class [even when] the work at home was difficult to handle'* (11-year-old boy, Community E, South Gondar). Provision of solar lamps also facilitated homework. Several girls in our research noted that solar lights enable them to do their homework, especially as their daylight hours, outside of school, are fully occupied by domestic and agricultural work. A 12-year-old girl from Community G (South Gondar) observed: *'I study at night with the bulb. We use it the whole night.'*

A surprising number of younger adolescents reported that their parents (usually their fathers given that mothers are more likely to be illiterate) also helped them with their homework. An 11-year-old girl from Community K (East Hararghe) reported that her father *'always opens a book at night when he comes from the farm and tests me if I can read and understand'*. An 11-year-old girl from Debre Tabor (South Gondar) observed that her mother, who never went to school, still manages to stay on top of her schoolwork, because she *'sees and compares our exercise book with my aunt's daughter'*.

However, as with adolescents' aspirations, our research found that parents' motivation to support their children's schooling may be weakening in some communities as unemployment rates rise. A mid-adolescent boy in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) observed: *'Due to the large number of unemployed graduate youths, there are also families who are demotivated to send their children, especially girls, into school'*.

### Gender differences in parental support

Despite progress, many caregivers still favour boys over girls when it comes to support for education. Girls are typically required to spend more time on household chores, even when parents recognise that this has negative implications for girls' school work and even when they are also working for pay outside the home (Tafere, 2017; Jones et al., 2014a,b, 2015, 2016a,b, 2017; Karippai and Kassa, 2010; Camfield and Tafere, 2011; Pankhurst et al., 2018).

Our quantitative work suggests that this pattern holds true. Across the younger cohort, our survey found that 69% of female caregivers aspire for their sons to pursue university education, compared to 66% for their daughters. As with adolescents' aspirations, contextual differences

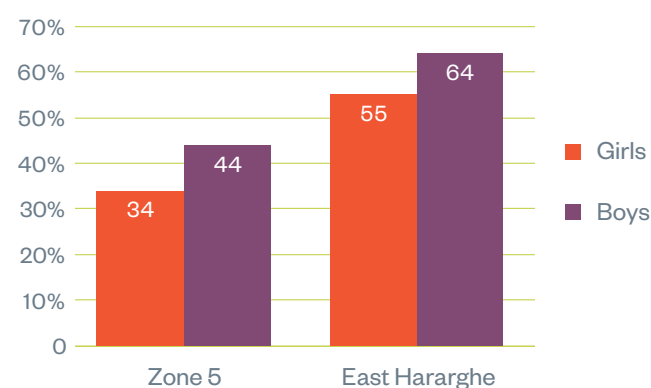
are key to understanding gender differences in caregivers' aspirations. While female caregivers in South Gondar have similar aspirations for their sons and daughters (72% and 75% respectively), in East Hararghe and Zone 5 (Afar), they significantly favour their sons (see Figure 5).

Our qualitative work found that most adults agreed that parental support for girls' education is much stronger now than it was only a few years ago. A teacher in Community K (East Hararghe) reported, *'When I first came I was asking myself, where do the girls go? But now there is a big change.'* Indeed, in Community D (South Gondar), a key informant observed that many families now *'prefer to teach their daughters than their boys'*. She noted that not only are girls better students, who can *'think for their mothers'*, but girls are also better providers: *'If she is educated, there is a chance that she will look back to her parents. If the boy is educated, he cares for nothing but his own interests.'*

However, despite improvements, our research found that some girls – especially in East Hararghe – continue to receive less parental support for their education than boys, largely because of the discriminatory gender norms that shape how their families define and value their roles. For example, a 10-year-old girl in Community J (East Hararghe) reported that her parents pay 150 Ethiopian birr a month to send her brother to school, but skimp on her school supplies: *'They give him money by selling khat. But for me they bought only these two exercise books.'* A key informant from Community K (East Hararghe) observed that educational investments may also reflect parents' deeper priorities, with parents choosing to buy *'soap and ointment'* for their daughters, rather than *'exercise book and pen'*, because they are thinking about their daughters' marriage rather than their education.

The overwhelming theme to emerge from our qualitative work, however, is that parents provide their daughters with less logistical support for education – and overburden them with domestic chores that keep them from attending school and prevent them from doing homework. This is true even in South Gondar, where parents' aspirations for

**Figure 5: GAGE younger cohort, percentage of caregivers who aspire for child to complete at least some tertiary education, by sex and region**



When we go to their homes to bring students to school, there are some mothers who throw stones at us. They think the girls should help them in the house because they have no other support.

(Principal, Community H, Ethiopia)

their daughters edges toward exceeding those for their sons. A school principal in Community E (South Gondar) observed, *'One of the major challenges is girls' workload at home, which results in them arriving late as well as school absenteeism, which in turn affects their educational performance.'* A principal in Community H (East Hararghe) agreed and added that mothers are so determined to have their daughters support them at home that they sometimes resist *kebele* leaders' efforts to bring girls to school: *'When we go to their homes to bring students to school, there are some mothers who throw stones at us. They think the girls should help them in the house because they have no other support.'*

Adolescents themselves also emphasised gender differences in parental support for education. Several 12-year-old boys (from Community H and Community L, East Hararghe) noted that girls *'are not promoted'* or are *'not clever in the class'* because they *'don't properly follow their education [because they are] responsible for performing domestic work'*. As a 12-year-old girl from Community C (South Gondar) reported: *'After we finish school and go home we do too much work, we get very exhausted and the next day the routine is the same; instead of reading I am ordered to herd the cattle, and collect animal dung for firewood.'*

## Access to education

As already noted, driven by the government's determination to achieve middle-income status by 2025,

Ethiopia has seen a sea change in terms of access to education. On a national level, but with marked regional variation in *'emerging regions'*, nearly all children now enrol in primary school (UNESCO, 2018; MoE, 2017). Indeed, of the young adolescents involved in our research, our survey found that 85% were enrolled in school and that the mean number of years of education completed was 4.6. However, our qualitative research – like the Young Lives study (which found that students from the poorest households lag about two years behind their peers in terms of educational attainment) (Woldehanna et al., 2017; Pankhurst, 2018) – paints a far more complex picture than enrolment statistics would suggest. While that picture is deeply textured by gender and contextual differences (see Box 5), these differences are rooted in poverty and subsistence agriculture.

## Initial enrolment

We found that the first hurdle that Ethiopian adolescents face in terms of accessing an age-appropriate, gender-responsive and quality education is initial enrolment, although, as the statistics show, this is a hurdle that most adolescents clear, with the exception of the poorest and most marginalised. Teachers in the *kebeles* in which we worked agreed that *'the number of students is increasing every year'* (Community J, East Hararghe) and that *'compared with the past, nowadays the number of students joining school is increasing'* (Community F, South Gondar), with the exception of Zone 5 (Afar) (see Box 5).



Adolescent girl in Dire Dawa © Nathalie Bertrams / GAGE 2019



**Box 5: How context affects education and learning**

Contextual differences in adolescents' access to schooling cannot be overemphasised – especially when they are layered with gender differences. Of our younger cohort, 96% of urban versus 83% of rural students are enrolled in school. As well as having higher enrolment rates, urban students have completed a full extra year of school – 5.5 compared with 4.5 for their rural counterparts – and are more comfortable speaking up in class (91% versus 79%).

Our qualitative work explored these differences and found that in urban areas, students are more likely to start school on time, have more contact hours in the classroom (as urban areas tend to have full-day schooling compared to half-day shifts in rural areas), have better-resourced schools, have better-trained teachers, and are burdened with less domestic and agricultural work. Urban students are also more likely to report attending private schools – and have the option of evening schools, which allow them to combine work with education. As a teacher in rural Community J (East Hararghe) observed, *'There is a difference between the towns and rural areas. They have libraries and read different books.'* A 13-year-old girl, now living in urban Batu (East Shewa) but formerly living in rural Gojjam, agreed: *'I have gained knowledge since I have come here. When I was in Gojjam, I did not understand anything... Teachers did not teach us well.'*

In terms of regional differences, among young adolescents living in rural areas, our survey found that 92% of those in South Gondar, 78% of those in East Hararghe and 63% of those in Zone 5 (Afar) were enrolled in school. Differences in grade attainment were just as stark. Whereas students in South Gondar had completed an average of 4.5 years, and those in East Hararghe had completed an average of 4.8, those in Zone 5 (Afar) had completed only 2.4 years. Young adolescents in South Gondar (83%) felt more comfortable speaking up in class than their peers in East Hararghe (76%) and Zone 5 (Afar) (75%).

Our qualitative research helps to elucidate what is driving these differences. In South Gondar, most communities not only have full-cycle primary schools, they have a longer history with formal education. Uptake is high – and climbing over time. In East Hararghe, several competing narratives emerged about how adolescents and their families are investing (or not) in education. Outside of the draw of the cash economy (especially khat farming), which is pulling many boys out of school in early and mid-adolescence (something that is discussed in detail in the companion report on economic empowerment), adults were clear that the current drought (as well as earlier periods of drought) has radically restricted parents' ability to educate their children. A *woreda*-level administrator in Community L (East Hararghe) noted that children *'travel no less than six hours in search of water'* every day, meaning that they have no time to come to school. Indeed, a 10-year-old girl in Community H observed that of her class of 108 students, *'now we are only 30'*.

Adults also noted that recent changes to traditional shegoye dancing (see companion report on health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health) are seriously impacting adolescents' attendance, learning, and continued enrolment. Whereas shegoye dancing used to happen seasonally, now it is happening almost nightly. It leaves young participants too tired to pay attention in school (and, as noted in the companion report on bodily integrity, is leading to *'child-driven'* child marriages among younger and younger girls). *'They feel dizzy when they attend class because they don't sleep the whole night,'* explained a Youth League representative from Community I (East Hararghe).

In Zone 5 (Afar), where physical access to education remains non-existent in remote areas – since there are no teachers *'willing to go there'* and face *'sickness to the point of death because of shortage of food'* (*woreda*-level education informant) – there were also more reports of poor teacher quality and under-resourced classrooms. An education expert from Community A noted that this is partly because while government *'policy says students should learn in their mother tongue until grade 8... we are not able to do that because there is a shortage of teachers who speak Afar language'*, which means that the region is hiring 10th grade graduates with little training to handle lower-primary classrooms. However, with children dropping out because of *'[clan] conflict'* and *'when they migrate to another place in search of pasture for their livestock'* (teacher, Community A, Zone 5, Afar), it appears almost unheard of for students to make it to upper-primary school. Indeed, an education expert in Community A (Zone 5, Afar) observed that while the *'school was founded in 1997 E.C to teach up to grade 4... no one has reached that grade yet'*.

They feel dizzy when they attend class because they don't sleep the whole night [because of the *shegoye* traditional dancing].

(A Youth League representative, Community I, East Hararghe, Ethiopia)

Our baseline work – like Young Lives (Rossiter et al., 2017) – found that younger adolescents generally enrolled in school 'on time'. The mean age of enrolment in grade 1 was 7.2 years. Many principals and teachers also highlighted that on-time enrolment has significantly improved in recent years – especially in East Hararghe (where mean age of first enrolment is 6.8 years) and South Gondar (7.7 years). A teacher from Community F (South Gondar) stated that '*children are now starting their education when they are five years old*' whereas '*previously there was no child enrolled in school before 10 or 11 years of age*'. That said, 700 young adolescents who completed our survey did not know how old they were when they

started school – and our qualitative work suggests that many of them may have started quite late. A 10-year-old boy from Community K (East Hararghe) explained that he had just started grade 1 because he was '*herding cattle... on my brother's behalf*'. Similarly, a 12-year-old girl from Community G (South Gondar) noted: '*One of my younger sisters is 11 years old and in grade 1. But the younger one is 9 years. She looks after cattle until my sister's son grows up. She will start school after he grows up.*'

Our qualitative work also found that some adolescents continue to be shut out of school entirely. While this is particularly the case for those with disabilities (see Box 7) – due to the lack of schools that can accommodate special learning needs – the realities of subsistence agriculture also deprive some children of education. In some families, almost exclusively in Zone 5 (Afar), no children go to school. An 11-year-old boy in Community A (Zone 5, Afar) explained:

*I have a strong interest in education, but I have been busy herding camels. Our sisters are herding goats and cattle, while I and my older brother are herding the camels. Thus, every child is busy and can't attend education.*

#### Box 6: Aster: 'The source of my hope'

Aster is a 18-year-old girl living in Debre Tabor. Blind since the age of 10, she lives at a church with a group of other adolescents with disabilities and attends 2nd grade in a special needs classroom. While she used to believe '*I was dead*', since she started school and developed friendships with other young people with disabilities, she is '*looking to the future than the past*'. She plans to complete her schooling and become a '*civil servant, employed in government offices*', and wants to '*make a living just like others*'.

Aster recalled: '*When I was in grade 3, I felt pain in my eyes. It was painful, and I had blurred vision*'. She told her parents she was having symptoms, '*But you know how rural parents are; they just didn't listen to me*'. By the time her parents took her seriously, '*it was already too late*'. She had lost her sight and the doctors explained that she would be permanently blind because her '*lenses are not working*'. The doctor '*proposed to send me to special needs class here in Debre Tabor*'. But her parents '*wanted to try other options*'. They took her for holy water and even consulted another doctor, who also '*told them there is no hope and that I should just start school*'.

For the next six years, Aster said, her parents almost completely ignored her. Previously '*spoiled by all*' because she is the '*last child of the house*', she continued, '*everything changed... when I got blind. They see me as a dead person. They don't see me get education, with a job, married and have a life of my own. They don't think I can get a job and support my parents.*'

When she was 16, a cousin who is '*now in Debre Tabor University in the extension programme*' came to visit and told her that she needed to leave home and move to Debre Tabor and enrol in the school the doctors had first suggested when she went blind. Older now, and better able to make her own decisions, Aster took his advice.

Her life has now been transformed. Supported by her teachers, who '*don't skip lessons and they teach until all of us understand it*', and inspired by the role models who '*come to the church and tell us that we can succeed just like them*', Aster no longer lives '*in fear*'. Most importantly, she explained, she is now surrounded by friends who also have disabilities and encourage her to believe in herself and her future. '*I thought I was dead; but not anymore. My friends became the source of my hope.*'

### Box 7: Educational access for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities, particularly those who have vision, hearing or intellectual impairments, have particularly limited access to education in Ethiopia. Indeed, the most recent primary net enrolment rate (NER) reported by the government is only 7.8%. Our own work – which uses a broader definition of disability and combined random and purposive sampling to address the fact that many children with disabilities are effectively invisible because they are hidden at home by disability-related stigma (see Jones et al., 2018; Muz et al., 2018) – found that 62% of young adolescents with disabilities are enrolled in school (compared to 85% of their peers without disabilities). It also found that adolescents with disabilities have completed, on average, one year less of school than their peers without disabilities (3.3 versus 4.6 years), in part because they enrol a half year later (at age 7.8 years versus 7.2 years). Young adolescents with disabilities are also less likely to feel comfortable speaking up in class than their peers without disabilities (65% versus 81%).

That said, our qualitative work highlights that Ethiopia is making progress towards improving access to education for adolescents with disabilities. As well as launching a teacher training programme, the government is also beginning to scale up ‘disability-friendly’ schools, mainly by establishing integrated ‘resource’ classrooms to provide extra help to children with visual, hearing and intellectual impairments. Schools – primarily in urban areas and disproportionately located in the regions of Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (MoE, 2016) – are now offering special classes for children through grade 4. Taught by teachers trained in Braille and sign language, these classes sometimes provide a ‘*separate nanny or caregiver*’ (adolescent girl, Batu, East Shewa) for each child with an intellectual impairment, teaching children how to read and communicate. At the end of 4th grade, when children are assumed to have mastered the fundamentals of literacy in the language they require (sign language or Braille), students are moved into regular classrooms at those same schools.

Key informants at one school in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) told us that ‘*students flood to our school*’, coming from ‘*far distant areas*’ because rural schools often lack special needs teachers. Another, from Community E, explained that demand for education is so high that most of the students with disabilities who are enrolled in lower-primary classes are mid-adolescents and there are even ‘*first graders who are 20 years old*’.

Students and parents emphasised that they had welcomed the opportunity for tailored education. One 16-year-old boy from Batu (East Shewa), with a hearing impairment, told us that he had tried to attend school back in his own village, but after three years had given up because ‘*I could not understand the teachers*.’ The mother of several children with hearing impairments from Community D (South Gondar) told us that while she had never wanted her children to ‘*become illiterate like me*’, there had previously been no options for them to attend school. Similarly, a 16-year-old boy with a visual impairment in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) told us that he had dropped everything and moved to town to attend school as soon as he knew it was an option: ‘*One day I heard that there is help for disabled people in this town, so I came here*.’

From students’ perspectives, the overwhelming advantage of the ‘inclusive’ schools they are now attending is their access to people who care about them. Adolescents told us that they value their peers, because while they used to be ‘*insulted and harassed*’, ‘*there is no discrimination or insulting in the community now*’ (17-year-old girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar), and they love their teachers, who are ‘*very supportive and cooperative*’ (16-year-old boy, Debre Tabor, South Gondar). Students appreciate not only that teachers are there with ‘*any help during the lesson*’ (16-year-old boy, Debre Tabor, South Gondar) and ‘*teach until all of us understand it*’ (16-year-old girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar), but also that teachers ‘*understand my problem*’, are ‘*fun during break time*’, and go so far as to ‘*deduct from their salary and buy us many things*’ (mid-adolescents, Debre Tabor, South Gondar). For their part, teachers in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) told us how seriously they take their jobs, both educationally and in terms of socio-emotional care and support, with one noting that ‘*looking after them and cultivating them is on our shoulders*’.

In most families, however, it appears that some children are chosen to stay home while others are sent to school. A key informant from the Women’s Association in Community D (South Gondar) explained that, ‘*parents with low incomes*

*have to decide to make some of their children farmers and others educated*’. Which child is kept home varies – by birth order and sex – and is often shaped around parents’ calculations as to which children are critical in supporting

domestic and farm work burdens, in the context of household cycles, poverty and shocks. A 12-year-old boy in Community H (East Hararghe) reported, *'My older brother is not learning... My responsibility is to learn. I am not expected to herd cattle.'* Similarly, a mid-adolescent girl from Community B (Zone 5, Afar) added, *'My younger brother and sister are at school, I am their elder, and they could go to school because I look after the cattle.'*

## Regular attendance

The second hurdle we identified in terms of adolescents' access to education is regular attendance – both throughout each week and then on a more seasonal basis throughout the year. As with initial enrolment, we found that agricultural and domestic work (sometimes associated with market days) most often drive non-attendance, with younger adolescents in rural areas missing an average of 15% of days over the last two weeks, compared to only 6% of days for their urban peers – and with Zone 5 (Afar) adolescents especially disadvantaged given the demands on their time arising from pastoralist livelihoods (see Figure 6). Our qualitative work highlighted that as adolescents get older, temporary work-related migration begins to drive seasonal non-attendance, especially for boys.

In some cases, adolescents attend school on a daily basis, but miss hours of learning. A mid-adolescent boy in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) explained that *'[school] guards do not allow the students who are late for class to enter into the school. So the students stay out of the school up to break time. That means they lose three classes.'* An administrator from that same city added that rural students who are coming into the city to attend classes are particularly disadvantaged. While schools in

town operate on a full-day rather than half-day basis, rural students cannot stay *'because of lack of lunch and their family needs their support for half days'*.

In other cases, adolescents miss full days of school. A teacher in Community F (South Gondar) observed, *'From 56 students, 40 of them come to class.'* This is a significant issue, as a teacher from Community L (East Hararghe) noted, because it impinges on student learning: *'If the medium achiever is absent, he will be a low achiever. And if the top achiever is absent, he will be a medium achiever.'* Students agreed with this view, but reported that they had no input into whether their attendance was regular – as decisions about how their time is allocated are made by their parents. A married 14-year-old girl from Community C (South Gondar) explained:

*At the time of threshing, we will have to prepare food and take lunch to our family members who are working at the field; then, we will miss class. There are weeks in which I never miss a day and there are weeks in which I miss two days of school.*

An 11-year-old boy from Community H (East Hararghe) added, *'I would be absent some days, usually on Friday. My parents would bark at me on Fridays [if I attended school], it is when I look after the cattle.'*

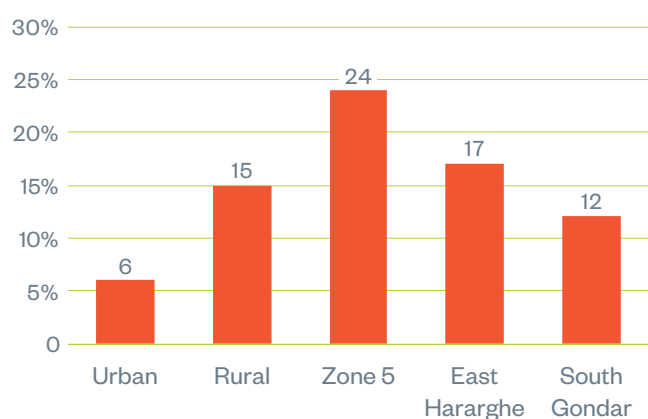
Teachers understand that truancy is generally not students' fault, but offer students little flexibility. When children arrive late, many are refused entry while others are punished – often physically. This means that students who would have missed only hours of learning instead miss whole days, as they choose to skip school rather than endure a beating for something beyond their control. A 12-year-old boy from Community F (South Gondar) added, *'We don't go in to school if we are late because the teacher punishes us if we are late.'*

Students also miss entire weeks and months of school if they or their families migrate for work or to find pasture or if they are needed at home to help with harvesting. As a principal in Community D (South Gondar) explained:

*Local people's livelihood is based on agricultural activities and livestock production. As a result, most registered students used to be absent from school during the harvesting season [September to November] and they also used to be absent from school in the main farming season [cultivating and planting from March to June].*

This pattern is common in East Hararghe and Zone 5 (Afar) as well. As one teacher from Community H (East Hararghe) explained: *'When parents go to their farm land to do farm*

**Figure 6: GAGE younger cohort, percentage of school days missed over last two weeks, by location**





**Students are absent from the class for almost a semester... they enrol in the school in the month of September and are returning to school in December.**

(A teacher from Community A in Zone 5, Afar, Ethiopia)

work, children look after the cattle and goats. They come back after two or three months.' Another, from Community A (Zone 5, Afar) added, 'Students are absent from the class for almost a semester... they enrol in the school in the month of September and are returning to school in December'. While younger adolescents tend to miss weeks or months of school because they are helping their families, as noted in the companion report on economic empowerment, older adolescents – especially boys – are increasingly likely to undertake seasonal migration because they are working for pay. An educational expert in Community C (South Gondar) noted:

*Children often migrate to other places in search of work – boys usually leave to go to the commercial farming areas of Metema and Humera in search of seasonal jobs, mainly during the sesame weeding and harvesting periods.*

### Continued enrolment

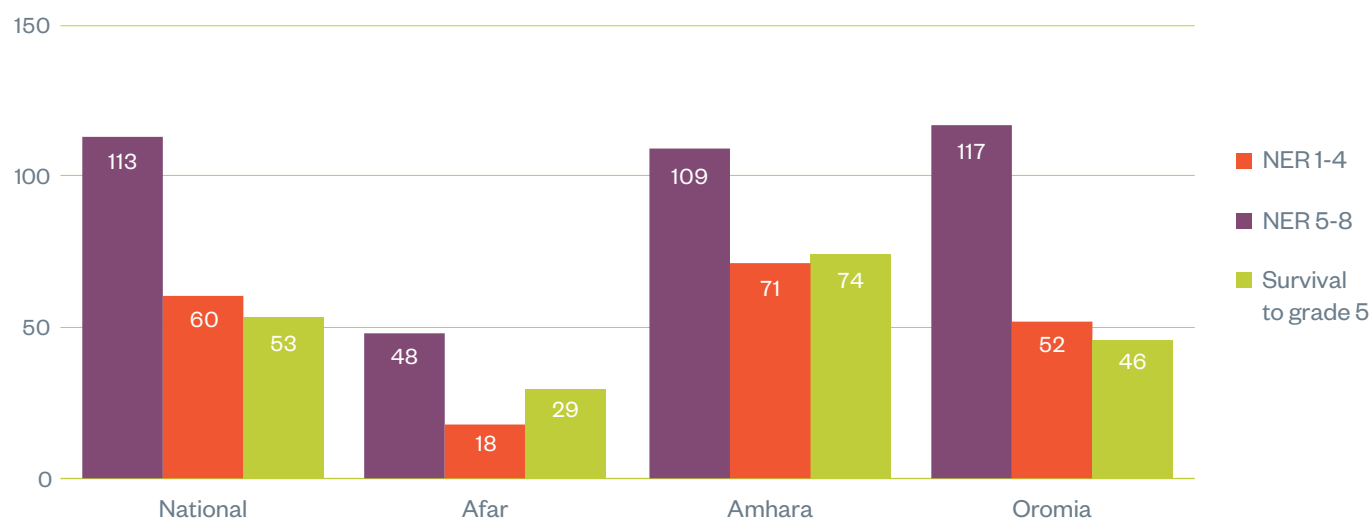
The third hurdle we identified in terms of adolescents' access to age-appropriate, gender-responsive and quality education is continued enrolment. On the one hand, our quantitative work found that most young adolescents, outside of Zone 5 (Afar), are largely 'on track' in terms of

grade attainment. At an average age of 11, those in East Hararghe had completed a mean of 4.8 years and those in South Gondar 4.5 years (although as already noted, in Zone 5 (Afar), the mean grade attainment was only 2.4 years – which is only partially accounted for by the fact that children enrol at age eight in that area). On the other hand, while young adolescents in GAGE research sites are 'on track' at age 11, there is reason to believe (given government figures (see Figure 7) that show a significant drop-off in enrolment in upper-primary school) that the next year or two will be critical in terms of preventing dropout.

Rural children's inconsistent attendance makes it difficult for them to keep up with their school work. Over time, this leads some to drop out part-way through the school year – hoping to try again next year – and eventually closes the door on education entirely. As a teacher in Community L (East Hararghe) observed, as their grades drop and their progress stalls, 'then the student will be absent forever'.

Retention issues are visible at the school level. A principal in Community D (South Gondar) observed that of the 191 students enrolled in grades 4–8, 84 had dropped out. An educational key informant in Community I (East Hararghe) similarly noted: 'The school is full of students during September but they don't last long till the end of the academic year.' The magnitude of the problem, however, is best brought to light by aggregate statistics. As highlighted in Figure 7, on a national level, the NER<sup>3</sup> for upper-primary school (grades 5–8) (60%) is approximately half that of lower-primary school (grades 1–4) (113%) and only 53% of

**Figure 7: Net enrolment rate for primary school and survival to grade 5, by region**



Source: MoE, 2017

<sup>3</sup> The NER is over 100 because the census is out of date, and the population of young people is growing rapidly due to continued high fertility.

enrolled students stay in school until grade 5. Retention issues are particularly marked in Afar, where only 29% of students reach grade 5 and the NER for upper primary-school is only 18% (MoE, 2017), but retention rates are also significantly lower in Oromia compared to Amhara despite a higher initial NER.

For many students, problems with continued enrolment are exacerbated by violence at school and counterproductive disciplinary policies. As the companion report on bodily integrity explains, corporal punishment at the hands of teachers is endemic and can be quite severe, especially for younger adolescents and boys (see also Pankhurst et al., 2016). A number of young people in our qualitative research reported that they left school because they were tired of being punished for being late or for not understanding their lessons – absences that were often driven by parental demands on children's time. Others reported that they left school because they had been suspended – or even expelled – for being late or repeatedly absent. A young adolescent girl in Community H (East Hararghe) explained that one of her schoolmates *'left because she missed class many times'*. She added that because her friend's *'parents were unable to pay the penalty'* for their child being absent, the child was instead forced to leave school entirely. An older adolescent boy in

Dire Dawa offered a similar story: he was *'suspended for one year'* because he was regularly absent *'because there were some children who were beating me'*.

For some adolescents, family problems preclude continued enrolment (see Box 8). In addition to parental illness and death, which can increase demands on adolescent time as well as deepen poverty, divorce and remarriage emerged as key themes in our qualitative work. A principal in Community J (East Hararghe) observed that *'because they do not live with their parents'*, or must *'oscillate between father's and mother's house'*, students whose parents are divorced often *'quit school'*. A mid-adolescent boy in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) reported that this scenario had led him to leave school:

*I dropped out from grade 5 last year. I had a mother and father but after they came to this town they got divorced. Then I was left alone living with my grandmother in the rural area. The police took me to the orphanage in Bahir Dar town.*

Continued enrolment over time is also compromised by inadequate infrastructure, which leaves many young people in overcrowded, poorly resourced classrooms, which can be especially challenging for students with disabilities (see Box 9). In rural Amhara, our research found that it is not uncommon for there to be 50 or 60


### Box 8: Abreham: 'Getting back on track'

Abreham is a 16-year-old adolescent boy living in Batu (East Shewa) and working in construction. He has now restarted 4th grade, after having dropped out of school for several years with some of his friends because they heard they could 'get money' building roads. He hopes his newfound commitment to education will help him achieve the success that his brothers have not.

*'I started my education at the right age. I was in grade 4 and attending in a regular programme at the time when we heard that there were job opportunities in the cobblestone road construction project that had started in town.'* Leaving school was easy, because *'I was spending the majority of my time in Video houses and usually quarrelled with my teachers... [My parents] didn't force me to engage in the work, they were instead urging me to attend my education. But I went along with what my friends were doing.'*

Living in town and undertaking manual work has been eye-opening for Abreham. He has encountered a variety of positive role models who have inspired him to rethink his trajectory. *'I saw different individuals talking English and I realised that if I properly attend my education I will be able to speak like them.'* The passage of time has also honed Abreham's aspirations, especially as he has seen his own brothers struggle with addiction, and has come to the realisation that without education he too could take that path: *'Two of my older brothers have faced serious trauma... due to heavy addiction to drugs. I realised that my situation could also lead me to such addictive behaviours and possibly face the fate of my brothers.'*

When Abreham started back at school he had to begin again in grade 1, because he had lost his papers. Now, however, as he is *'seriously attending education and behaving well'*, he is working to get back on track and catch up with his peers. He hopes to take the 8th grade national exam and continue on to secondary school, which he knows can be done through a distance learning programme.

 I dropped out from grade 5 last year. I had a mother and father but after they came to this town they got divorced. Then I was left alone living with my grandmother in the rural area. The police took me to the orphanage in Bahir Dar town.

(A mid-adolescent boy in Debre Tabor, South Gondar, Ethiopia)

students in a classroom. In rural Oromia, some teachers reported teaching more than 100 students. In Community I (East Hararghe), one teacher explained that while *'there is demand to hire more than 200 teachers'*, to keep class sizes manageable, only *'36 teachers have been hired this year'*. In addition, principals and teachers variously observed that their schools *'do not have proper classrooms'* (Community G, South Gondar), *'do not have power'* (Community H, East Hararghe), have a *'serious shortage of textbooks'* (Community G, South Gondar), lack chairs, which leaves students with *'pain in their seats'* as they must sit on the floor (Community J, East Hararghe), have a *'shortage of science kit materials in the laboratory'* (Community F, South Gondar) and *'lack blackboards'* (Debre Tabor, South Gondar). In rural Afar, deficits run deeper: Community B does not have a functioning school at all – only an unused building, because the teachers left and have not been replaced; while in Community A (Zone 5, Afar), teachers reported that *'we are teaching two classes of students merged together in one class'*.

Most of the communities in which we worked had at least one full-cycle primary school that serves students through the end of 8th grade. For example, teachers in both Community E (South Gondar) and Community L (East Hararghe) reported that their schools had been recently *'upgraded to grade 8'* as the government strives to keep more students learning for more years. However, a few adolescents from the most remote communities, even in South Gondar, reported that they face long daily commutes in order to access more than the first few years of primary school. A 10-year-old girl from Community G (South Gondar), now in grade 2, told us that it will take her three hours to get to 3rd grade next year. An 11-year-old girl in Community B (Zone 5, Afar), who would very much like to continue attending school, added that she cannot because *'the school is too far. It takes about four hours on foot.'*

A lack of WASH facilities also complicates continued enrolment – especially for older adolescents (who tend to be more careful about their hygiene) and girls (once they begin to menstruate). Only 6% of the younger adolescent girls who completed our survey reported that their school had facilities for menstrual hygiene management, and with no facilities at all in our Zone 5 (Afar) sites (15% urban, 5% rural, 7% South Gondar, 3% East Hararghe, 0% Zone 5 (Afar)). As also noted in the companion report on health, this leaves many girls *'absent from school during their menstruation periods'* (teacher, Community F, South Gondar). However, a lack of changing rooms and disposal units for sanitary pads is only the tip of the iceberg, according to respondents in our qualitative research. A

### Box 9: Educational transitions for students with disabilities

Our qualitative research found that the biggest problem with the way Ethiopia is currently educating children who have special learning needs is that they effectively lose all support when they leave *'resource classrooms'* (classes for children with disabilities which teach Braille and sign language, which only go up to grade 4) for mainstream classrooms. While teachers told us that mainstream teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities are improving, due to *'good-performing students in the first batch'* (teacher, Community E, South Gondar), the practical support that students with disabilities (and especially students with hearing impairments) need to succeed in regular classrooms is simply not available. As one 16-year-old boy from Batu (East Shewa) summarised: *'Things were simple when I was in inclusive education.'*

Students with hearing impairments told us that once they joined regular classes, *'education was provided with voice and no sign language'*, and although students are able to lip read, teachers often *'speak turning to face the blackboard'* (17-year-old girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar). They also explained that particular subjects were challenging, especially science and English, which require special vocabulary that makes lip reading very difficult. Several noted that while it would be easier for students with hearing impairments to sit together, so that they could explain things to one another, the *'teacher put them in a different place and group so we don't have a chance to communicate with each other in a classroom'* (17-year-old girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar).

principal in Community L (East Hararghe) explained that *'The severe problem we have is absence of toilets in the school. Students are excreting on the ground. The toilet is broken.'* A teacher in Community H (East Hararghe) added:

*Though there is water service in the community, we do not have water in the school. Students are forced to use open fields. So you can imagine how this impacts the teaching/learning processes in the school.*

Indeed, even in urban Debre Tabor (South Gondar), key informants told us that schools have *'no water and no clean or girl-friendly toilets'*. Again, as noted in the companion report on health, the lack of adequate WASH facilities is a key driver of ill health for both young people and adults. The government has recognised this, as its Annual Educational Abstract reports on schools' access to WASH.

Continued enrolment is also constrained by the developmental and social imperatives of adolescence. When children enrol in school late, or take years to progress through lower-primary school due to repetition, they may hit the transition between lower primary and upper primary not at age 10 or 11, but at 14 or 15. This makes it difficult for them to continue, because, while the real costs of attendance remain low for upper-primary school, the opportunity costs of schooling an adolescent are comparatively high. Many students, both girls and boys, leave school in early adolescence – regardless of whether they have completed primary school – in order to work. Our qualitative research found that many adolescents, girls and boys and particularly from poorer households and in Zone 5 (Afar), drop out of school before they complete primary school in order to undertake unpaid farm work for their parents. A *woreda*-level key informant in East Hararghe explained, *'There is high demand of children for work in our district. Rather than sending children to school, getting labour assistance from children is widely seen.'* A health extension worker from Community J (East Hararghe) added, *'For rural youth, the challenge is that family put all the responsibilities of farm activities on children.'*

Another group of out-of-school adolescents in our qualitative research – again both girls and boys and perhaps most commonly in East Hararghe – had dropped out of primary school in order to do paid work to help

**My mother gave birth to my brother. I left school. There was no one to run errands for her. She used to ask me to run errands.**

(An 11-year-old girl in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia)

support their families. What work they undertake depends not only on their age and gender, but where they live – as opportunities vary across regions and between urban and rural locations. In Community H (East Hararghe), for example, *'there is khat cash crop available in the community'*, which pulls many adolescents out school (principal). In Community K (East Hararghe), on the other hand, a key informant reported that it is more common for adolescents to *'work in other people's house, be it here or in towns. They collect firewood and fetch water for rich people. They also collect firewood and sell it in town.'* A mid-adolescent boy in Batu (East Shewa), who is working in road construction, explained that while he had tried to combine work and school, he *'couldn't get time to attend my education... I dropped out of my education from grade 4'*. An 11-year-old girl in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) explained that her older sister had faced a similar problem: *'My sister started working as a domestic worker in people's houses. She dropped out of school in grade 6, when she was not able to combine schooling with work.'*

A third group of adolescents – almost exclusively girls and again most commonly in East Hararghe – left school while still studying at primary level in order to support their mothers by doing household chores. A teacher in Community K (East Hararghe) put the blame on both parents, explaining that *'The first reason children are absent from school in this area is... they help their parents with household work. If you ask parents why they don't send their children to school, the mother and father say "Who helps me?"'* Some suggest that mothers in particular often put pressure on daughters to drop out as they themselves are overburdened with domestic and care work. For example, a 12-year-old girl in Community H (East Hararghe) noted, *'I dropped out from grade 6 as there is no one [at home] who can do domestic work. She [mother] said as no one does domestic work, she told me to drop out.'* An 11-year-old girl in Dire Dawa added, *'My mother gave birth to my brother. I left school. There was no one to run errands for her. She used to ask me to run errands.'*

**The school is too far. It takes about four hours on foot.**

(An 11-year-old girl in Community B, Zone 5, Afar, Ethiopia)



## Gender differences

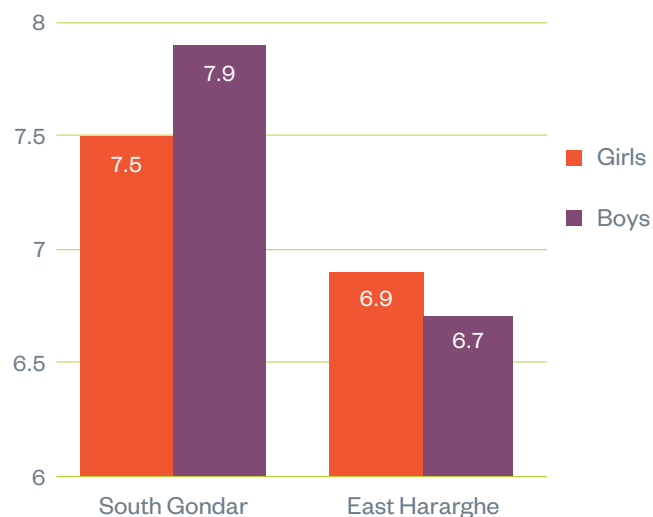
The relationship between gender and access to education is complex. On the one hand, gender parity in primary school has not yet been reached at the national level (it was 0.9 in 2017). Boys are more likely to be enrolled in both primary and secondary school than girls. On the other hand, in some regions, girls' outcomes are now surpassing boys'. For example, in Amhara (77% versus 70%) and Afar (30% versus 28%), girls are more likely to reach grade 5; (although in Oromia the reverse is true (45% versus 47%)) (MoE, 2017).

Our research found that gender differences in access to education must be understood in context. For example, while at the aggregate level girls and boys start school at the same age (7.2 years), when one looks across regions,

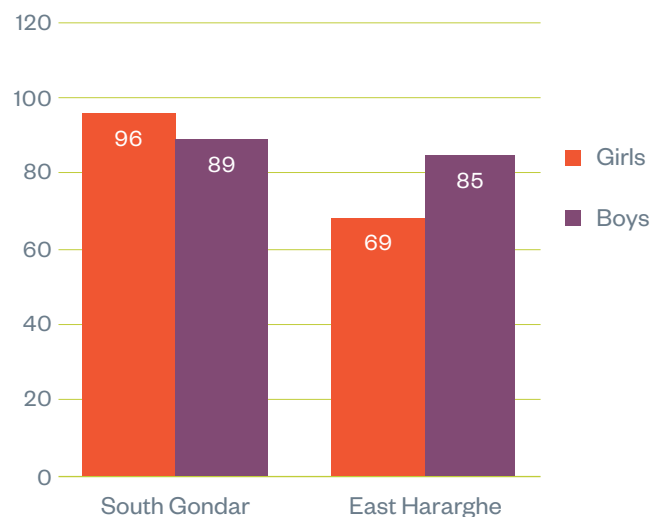
there are marked differences that effectively cancel each other out. In South Gondar, girls start school before boys (see Figure 8); in East Hararghe, where there is a more limited history of girls' schooling, boys start school before girls. (In Zone 5 (Afar), children start school at an average age of 8.1 years if female and 8.2 if male.)

This pattern holds true for current enrolment, attendance and grade attainment as well. As Figure 9 shows, girls are more likely than boys to be enrolled in school in South Gondar. In East Hararghe, however, the reverse is true. The enrolment gap is 15% in favour of boys. (In Zone 5, Afar, differences are not significant). Figure 10 highlights that in Zone 5 (Afar), girls have missed fewer days over the past two weeks than boys (not statistically

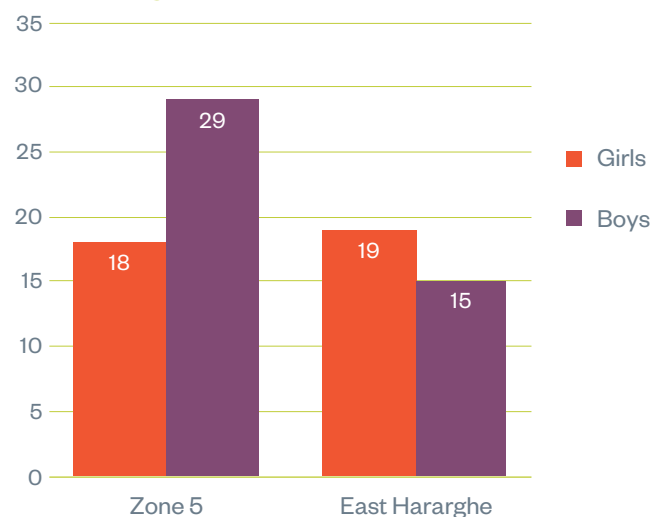
**Figure 8: GAGE younger cohort, age at first enrolment, by sex and region**



**Figure 9: GAGE younger cohort, enrolment in school, by sex and region**

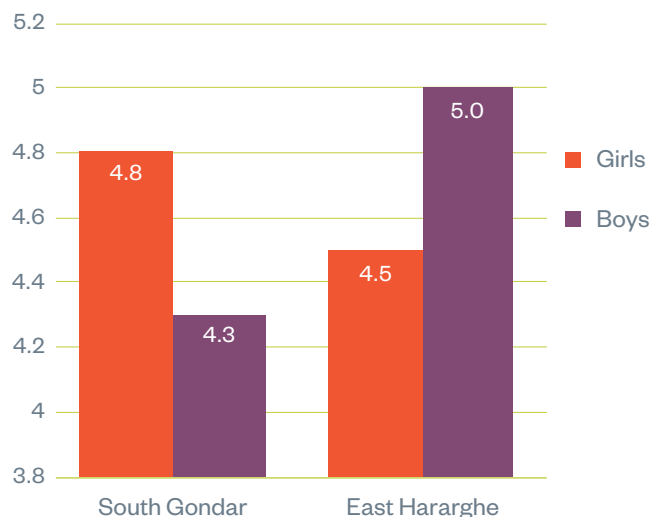


**Figure 10: GAGE younger cohort, percentage of school days missed over last two weeks, by sex and region**



*Not statistically significant.*

**Figure 11: GAGE younger cohort, mean years of school completed, by sex and region**



significant. The reverse is true in East Hararghe, while attendance does not vary by gender in South Gondar. In terms of grade attainment, in South Gondar, GAGE's younger girls have completed more years of school than boys; in East Hararghe, the reverse is true (see Figure 11), while differences are not significant in Zone 5 (Afar).

As already noted, our qualitative research found that many of the barriers that keep Ethiopian children out of school are higher for girls – at least traditionally, although this is changing. Due largely to the discriminatory gender norms that dictate how household work is allocated, girls are less likely to enrol in school initially and tend to have worse attendance, at least on a daily basis. They also have less time to complete their homework and are generally given less time to rest – the confluence of which leaves their learning outcomes at risk. Our baseline research, however, like Young Lives (Pankhurst et al., 2018) suggests that the relationship between gender and education is neither simple nor static, and thus requires further exploration. One possibility captured by our qualitative work is that boys' growing engagement with paid work is beginning to offset – and even overtake in some ways – the more traditional disadvantages that have faced girls. Because boys are working for pay while girls are doing household chores, boys are effectively forced to choose – at a fairly young age – between work and school. Girls, on the other hand, have greater flexibility and can combine the two for more years, albeit often at the cost of being 'clever' students due to long working hours which affect time for homework and sleep with spillover effects on concentration at school. Figures reported by a principal in Community D (South Gondar) point in that direction. In 2015, there were 133 boys and 58 girls enrolled in upper-primary school. By 2017, numbers were 71 and 67 respectively. While

girls' enrolment had climbed over the course of two years, boys' enrolment had plummeted.

While adolescent boys may be facing new threats to their engagement with education – growing out of the interaction between economic development and gender norms, which positions them as providers – girls continue to face more traditional threats in the form of sexual violence and child marriage as they enter and move through adolescence. As noted in the companion reports on health and bodily integrity, as girls' bodies mature, parents become more worried about their safety, given that girls' sexual purity is often central to family honour. A *kebele* leader from Community C (South Gondar) noted that this sometimes leads parents to pull their daughters out of school: 'Parents often arrived at a decision to keep back their daughters for fear of rape.' Girls who see their educational trajectories truncated are most often left with only one option: marriage.

Although, as discussed in the companion report on bodily integrity, a handful of adults in East Hararghe and Zone 5 (Afar) mentioned that adolescent boys sometimes engage in child marriage – and that those marriages can cause them to lose interest in education and leave school

Commonly they get married at 12. I was shocked at first. In the place I was born, girls are at school at 12. They do not even think about marriage. But here, children of 10 years don't talk about education, they talk about getting married.

(A teacher in Community H, East Hararghe, Ethiopia)

#### Box 10: Gender attitudes and norms and education

The GAGE quantitative survey collects data on a series of attitudes and norms about education. These include a series of nine statements such as '*Girls should be sent to school only if they are not needed to help at home*' and '*Adolescent girls in my community are more likely to be out of school than adolescent boys*'. The respondent is then asked to agree, partially agree or disagree with that statement. All questions are coded so that a value of 1 indicates that the answer is gendered and 0 otherwise. A score of 0 indicates that the respondent does not hold any gender attitudes or norms, and a score of 9 indicates that the respondent provided a gendered response to all answers.

On average, young adolescents score 4.1 out of 9 on gendered attitudes and norms around education, with boys holding more traditional values than girls (4.2 versus 4). We also found that rural young adolescents score higher than their urban counterparts (4.2 versus 3.2). Looking across regions, adolescents in Afar have more strongly gendered attitudes and norms (5.7) than those in either East Hararghe (4.2) or South Gondar (3.9). In urban areas, young boys hold the most strongly gendered attitudes and norms (3.4) with older females least likely to do so (2.4).

– our research found that it is overwhelmingly girls and not boys whose educational trajectories are shaped by marriage. (See Box 11 for a short discussion of how context affects the relationship between marriage and educational trajectories). Indeed, as noted earlier, even when girls and their parents have high educational and occupational aspirations, those aspirations are framed around marriage

as the alternative. In many rural communities, the ideal age for girls to marry is mid-adolescence. If girls started school on time and completed one grade per year, they would complete primary school before hitting that ideal age. However, because many girls start school late, and move through primary school in a non-linear fashion, many hit the age at which they ‘should’ marry before they

### Box 11: The regional context affects the interaction between marriage and education

As Harper et al. (2018: 7) observe, *‘for most adolescent girls in the Global South, marriage and education represent competing paths’*. Girls who stay in school typically do not marry as children. Those who leave school, on the other hand, often do – and have few routes back in, especially if they become mothers soon after marriage. Our qualitative work suggests that despite progress, this largely remains true in Ethiopia.

In Afar Zone 5, as noted in the companion report on bodily integrity, where girls tend to enrol late (if at all) and progress slowly through primary school because of demands on their time, marriages are arranged – usually in mid-adolescence – and opportunities for choosing school over marriage are effectively non-existent. While younger girls are more likely to be enrolled than younger boys, and have completed more years of schooling on average (because boys are less able to be spared from herding), older girls must marry when and who their parents dictate and have no option of staying in school after marriage. As a teacher in Community A (Zone 5, Afar) observed, as soon as they marry, *‘girls are prepared to live like their mother’*. Outside of practical realities, such as days full of *‘preparing food at home, fetching water, collecting fuelwood, and rearing goats’*, even if girls could find the time for school, husbands often prohibit their wives from attending. They are afraid their wives would *‘divorce after they complete their education’*. Indeed, in Community A, (Zone 5, Afar) adults admitted that because so many educated girls had refused to marry under the absuma system, there is now a community agreement to prohibit girls from attending secondary school. A key informant explained, *‘Most of the families arrange and marry their daughter before grade 8. This is because after grade 8, girls also start to refuse their families’ marriage arrangement.’*

In rural Amhara (South Gondar), where most child marriages are also still arranged, but uptake of education is overall quite high, the competition between pathways is complex because both routes are open. A teacher in Community G noted that because families in the area know that teachers will report parents who make their daughters leave school in order to marry, parents are now inventing pretexts, such as *‘health disorders’* and *‘economic recession’* to remove their daughters from school *‘prior to the date of their marriage arrangement’* so that they can avoid prosecution. In Community D (South Gondar), a kebele administrator explained that *‘when their parents insist that she should marry, girls will say “I will marry but I want to attend school as well”’*. For many, the combination does not work well. Some young married girls are forced to discontinue their schooling because their new husbands refuse to allow them to attend, while others drop out because they cannot find the time to keep up with their studies. A married 12-year-old in Community F (South Gondar), for example, reported that her older sister *‘dropped out of school while she was in grade 8... her husband refused to allow her to pursue her education’*. The 20-year-old husband of a young adolescent girl in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) explained that his wife *‘dropped her school because she was engaged in home life and she needs to work in business with me’*. On the other hand, our qualitative work found nascent signs of change, with an increasing number of husbands actively supporting their young wives to stay in school as a way of improving future financial stability. The husband of a young married girl in Debre Tabor (South Gondar), for example, reported that he is *‘nagging her to continue her education’*.


In rural Oromia (East Hararghe), where our research suggests that girls increasingly undertake child marriage by choice rather than by arrangement, girls usually prefer to drop out. A principal in Community J (East Hararghe) explained that *‘girls between ages 13 to 15 are ashamed of learning... so after this age they stop their education either to get married or to look for marriage, staying at home’*. A teacher from Community H (East Hararghe) added, *‘Commonly they get married at 12. I was shocked at first. In the place I was born, girls are at school at 12. They attend school. They do not even think about marriage. But when I came here, children of 10 years don’t talk about education, they talk about getting married.’*

have completed primary school. In communities in East Hararghe where girls even as young as 12 or 13 ‘choose’ marriage, some girls have barely started upper-primary school before adult roles of wife and mother beckon.

## Learning

Barriers to a quality education, especially in rural locations, are also reflected in learning outcomes. RISE (2018) reports that learning outcomes in Ethiopia are extremely low and have stagnated, and even dropped, as enrolment has increased. Pankhurst et al. (2018) report, for example, that only about 1% of 4th and 5th grade students are reading on grade level and by the end of 8th grade, most students are two or three grade levels below expectations in maths. While our quantitative work does not address learning outcomes,<sup>4</sup> our qualitative work found that adolescents, adults and educators largely agree that educational quality lags. While they also largely agree that lack of resources is primarily responsible for these poor outcomes, the emphasis they place on underlying drivers varies considerably.

As well as inadequate learning materials such as books in their classrooms, many adolescents in rural areas blame teachers and teacher absenteeism for poor learning outcomes. An 11-year-old girl from Community D (South Gondar) explained that while *‘some teachers teach well... others spend their teaching time by sitting... and do not teach properly’*. Adolescents in Community I (East Hararghe) and Community A (Zone 5, Afar) reported that their teachers either *‘went home’* (10-year-old girl) or *‘only teach until it is tea break and are gone’* (10–12 year old boys). Overall, young people reported a high level of teacher absenteeism, teaching methods that were not engaging, and poor classroom management, which makes it *‘difficult to pay attention’* (12-year-old girl, Community A, Zone 5, Afar).

 I quit my education in January. I like education. But I quit it because I couldn’t write and read. I didn’t pass grade 1. When I came to join from grade 1, they registered me in grade 3. Then I refused to continue my education.

(A 12-year-old boy, Community F, South Gondar, Ethiopia)

Parents and community members in rural areas are also inclined to blame teachers – but they understand why teachers are failing. A man in Community D (South Gondar) explained that *‘the main problem here is that teachers are not well trained or skilled’*. Moreover, as a man in Community H (East Hararghe) pointed out, because lower-grade classrooms are so overcrowded, teachers are often told they must promote children regardless of their academic performance (for grades 1–4). Teachers *‘are ordered to promote all students from one grade level to another and not to report students who have failed’*.

Rural teachers reported that they often feel they are in an impossible situation. Not only are classrooms overcrowded, which precludes any level of individual attention, and lacking in basic equipment (including desks and books), but all too often the teachers *‘are assigned in a field that they didn’t receive training in’* (teacher, Community F, South Gondar). Refresher training programmes are also infrequent and, due to the limited supply of teachers, schools are increasingly forced to hire *‘unqualified teachers who have only completed 10th grade’* (teacher, Community F, South Gondar). Teachers also noted that it is very difficult to plan lessons around students’ absenteeism, as they understand that children are falling behind but cannot hold back the entire class.

Our qualitative research found strong links between poor learning outcomes and disrupted enrolment in rural areas. Many of the out-of-school adolescents we interviewed reported that they had left school because they were not learning anything. Indeed, one of the most common refrains from young people is that they had asked to not be promoted – and when their request was denied, they chose to leave school rather than sit in a classroom where they were unable to follow the content. As a 12-year-old boy from Community F (South Gondar) explained:

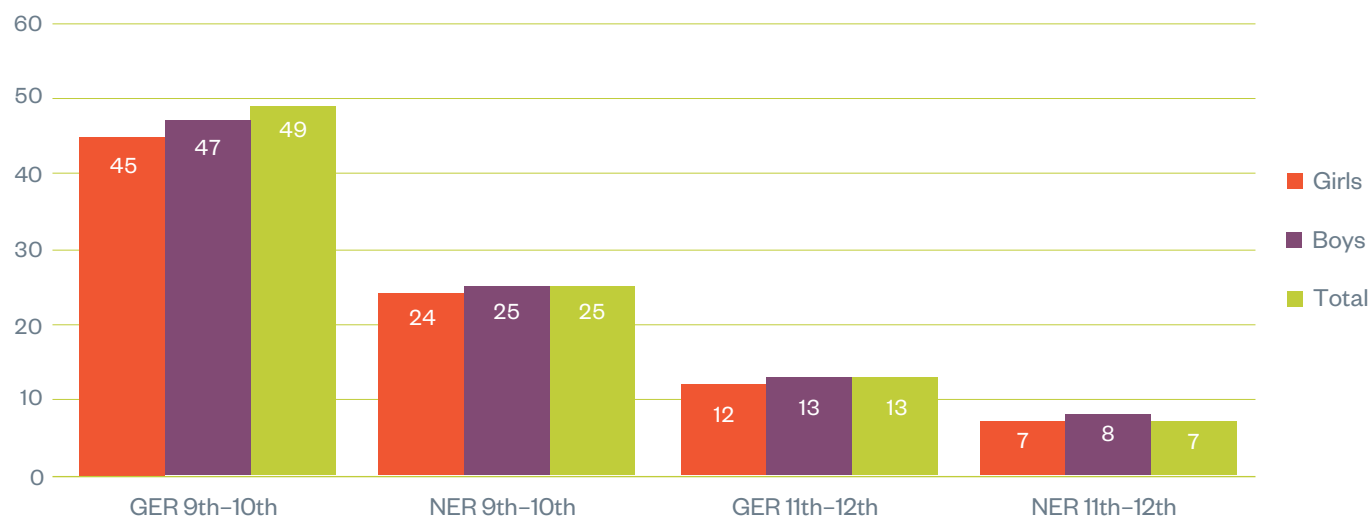
*I quit my education in January. I like education. But I quit it because I couldn’t write and read. I didn’t pass grade 1. When I came to join from grade 1, they registered me in grade 3. Then I refused to continue my education.*

## Educational transitions

Given that it remains difficult for many students to transition to upper-primary school, it is unsurprising that barriers to secondary school are often nearly insurmountable –especially for some groups of students.

<sup>4</sup> Adolescents completed the Raven’s Matrices, but this is a test of fluid intelligence, and not learning outcomes per se. We discuss results from analysis of the Raven’s Matrices elsewhere.



**Figure 12: Enrolment rates for secondary school, by sex**

Source: MoE, 2017

At a national level, the NER for lower-secondary school is only about 25%, though the GER is nearly twice as high due to the large number of students who are over age for grade (MoE, 2017) (see Figure 12). Only about one-tenth of students attend upper-secondary school (ibid.). Regional differences are notable. At the lower-secondary level (9th and 10th grades), the NER is 6% in Afar, 25% in Amhara and 17% in Oromia – which explains a great deal about why adolescents in Zone 5 (Afar) and East Hararghe have fewer role models to emulate than those in South Gondar (ibid.).

Because most adolescents in our baseline research are younger adolescents (and therefore at least several years away from transitioning to secondary school), and because our older adolescents are all living in urban areas and thus in quite different situations compared with their rural peers, our current round of research is not well-positioned to contribute to exploring transitions to secondary and post-secondary education. Among our older cohort, we know that 89% are attending school and that they have completed an average of 9.4 years of education. We know that girls are less likely to be enrolled than boys (87% versus 91%), though they have completed the same number of years of school. We also know that, reflecting regional patterns, adolescents in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) are not only more likely than those in Dire Dawa and Batu (East Shewa) to be enrolled (94%, 84% and 89% respectively), but they have also completed more education (10 years, 9.0 years and 9.2 years respectively).

Our qualitative work generally aligns with existing evidence, which suggests that the lack of easily accessible secondary schools is the main barrier to continued education. A teacher in Community G (South Gondar)

observed that for students in that community, secondary school means moving ‘*far from their families*’. This not only leads to high real costs, for ‘*food, stationery materials, house rent and others*’, but also to high opportunity costs, as adolescents cannot help support their parents with farm work and have more limited opportunities to work for pay. In Community D (South Gondar), which is ‘*4 hours walking distance... [from] Qualisa Secondary School... completing 8th grade is considered as the highest achievement*’ (principal). Findings are similar in East Hararghe, where a teacher in Community I noted that of the students who do enrol in secondary school, ‘*more than 50% drop out... because of financial problems*’. Adolescents and adults who participated in our research also emphasised that the increasing availability of paid work shapes older adolescents’ educational transitions, much more so than for younger adolescents. As we discuss in more detail in the companion report on economic empowerment, internal and international migration are significant draws for boys and girls alike.

For adolescents who have successfully transitioned to secondary school, the national exams given at the end of 10th and 12th grades are often insurmountable barriers to future education, as students must pass the 10th

**Parents don’t want to send their older female children because they might be attacked or become unexpectedly pregnant.**

(A key informant, Women’s Association in Community D, South Gondar, Ethiopia)

grade exam in order to continue on to either preparatory education or TVET, and must pass the 12th grade exam to enter university. Rural students are poorly prepared and *'only a few of them could pass their 10th grade exam'* (religious leader, Community E, South Gondar). Indeed, as a mid-adolescent girl in Community C noted, *'when the families are poor, children don't have enough time to study... If we have 100 students, 40 will pass and the rest will fail.'*

For girls, the transition to secondary school is further complicated by the same restrictive gender norms that shape their engagement with lower levels of schooling; years of poor attendance and limited time for homework mean that many struggle with coursework and ultimately

fail exams. Even though the government allows girls to pass to preparatory school (11th and 12th grades) and university with lower scores than boys, girls' failure rate is still much higher. Other girls are pushed or pulled towards marriage rather than education as they reach middle and then older adolescence. Fears for girls' safety also grow with their transition to secondary school, as most of those in rural communities must either walk long distances on a daily basis or live in rented lodgings away from their parents. As a key informant at the Women's Association in Community D (South Gondar) explained, *'Parents don't want to send their older female children because they might be attacked or become unexpectedly pregnant.'*

### Box 12: Khalid: 'The only solution is education'

Khalid is a 17-year-old boy *'living and sleeping in the street'* in Dire Dawa with his two-year-old sister, who is the *'first thing that makes me happy in my life'*. He has been caring for her since birth, because his mother *'used to be very angry and I was afraid that someday she might throw (the baby) away'*. Abandoned by their mother for over a year now, Khalid has one goal in life: *'I do not want my sister to see what I have seen.'*

After his sister was born, Khalid explained, *'our economic problems became worse and we also had to leave the house because we were not able to pay the rent'*. This made his mother furious and she began *'whining about why she gave birth to us'*. One day, Khalid continued, *'when I woke up in the morning she was not there'*. Eventually he realised that his mother was never coming back, so he dropped out of school to work, pooling his wages with a kindly neighbour who took them under her wing.

Several months after he left school, he stumbled upon a seminar *'for the youth and for those who don't go to school. In the seminar I found out that it's only when you get educated that you will change your life.'* Driven above all to change his sister's life, because *'I always worry about my little sister,'* Khalid gave himself a lecture. *'I talked to myself that I have to go to school because all my peers are in school. I am not lesser than they are by any means. I have to get back again.'* Fortunately for Khalid, school officials agreed and made sure the re-enrolment process was smooth: *'I went to school to register for grade 8... They accepted me without even asking me to bring my parents. I am attending my school now.'*

Khalid's teachers *'are very nice and understanding'*. Not only are they *'good at their education skills'* in the classroom, but *'if you are unable to understand they are willing to come to your house and give a tutorial'*. The students at his school are also committed to learning and are engaged, together with teachers, in making the school a better place. *'The students have a strong desire for education. Also, we usually consult with our teachers and after they consulted with us they will bring our case to the school director and discuss it there. For instance, previously the blackboard has white dots in it and while the teacher was writing on it, it was difficult to read and sometimes we misread things. However, after we commented on this, they refurnished the blackboard and it's fine now.'*

Khalid admits that despite the efforts of his teachers, the NGO that provides him with uniforms and school materials, and the kindly neighbour who watches his sister so that he can attend school, he *'always feels inferior'*. He does not have a bag to carry his school books and he is forced to *'wear shorts... when all other students are in casual wear'* because he does not have trousers.

He is remarkably adept, however, at putting his own feelings aside and staying focused on his longer-term objective. *'When I grow up, I want to study management. I will get a job and change my family's life. I will provide my sister with shelter, food, and education,'* he explained. *'The only solution is education.'*

# Change strategies to advance adolescent education and learning

We now discuss the extent to which change strategies are being pursued by key policy actors and practitioners to enhance adolescents' access to age-appropriate, gender-responsive, quality education. We follow the GAGE conceptual framework's disaggregation of change pathways from the micro through the meso to the macro level (see Figure 1).



## Empowering girls

Our research found a number of change strategies working directly to empower girls. These begin with basic awareness-raising approaches that help girls (and boys) to understand the value of education. In Community L (East Hararghe), where teachers note that children used to come to school for food (although emergency school feeding is often short-term), messages have been framed around helping young people understand that schooling can help ensure financial security – and less hunger – in the future:

*We are teaching children, advising them, saying 'though you are hungry now, you will not achieve your target by only having excess food'. Now the children are aware of the importance of education and are attending. [They understand that] if we do not attend education, the food will not come* (teacher, Community L, East Hararghe).

Messages are also framed around the importance of girls' education specifically; in South Gondar, girls who have been exposed to such messaging often state that educating a girl is educating a country.

Girls' clubs – a government initiative sometimes supported by NGOs – are also encouraging girls to pursue education. Some offer broader lessons on 'gender-related matters' and give girls mentoring support, while others are more focused on raising awareness around menstrual hygiene management and early marriage. In urban areas, where clubs are better resourced, some girls' clubs 'award best-performing female students' (teacher, Debre Tabor, South Gondar) or save money to 'buy modess [sanitary pads] and give them to those female students who cannot buy them themselves' (mid-adolescent girl, Debre Tabor, South Gondar).

Tutorial sessions for girls are another government initiative. These are framed as a form of affirmative action,

**There are tutorial classes for female students, but students do not attend them... When we ask them why, they told us they do not get permission to attend, and have no time to do homework because of household chores.**

(A teacher in Batu, East Shewa, Ethiopia)

whereby girls are offered academic assistance given that they tend to miss more schooling than boys due to household work burdens. Unfortunately, however, the same forces that keep girls from regularly attending schools can also work to ensure that they do not attend tutorials. A teacher in Batu (East Shewa) noted:

*There are tutorial classes for female students, but students do not attend them... When we ask them why, they told us they do not get permission to attend, and have no time to do homework because of household chores.*

In urban areas, a few respondents mentioned other initiatives aimed at empowering girls, including child parliaments which have a strong focus on rights and girls' advisory committees. For example, a mid-adolescent girl in Dire Dawa noted that her school has a children's parliament that 'facilitates training and counselling services for female students (and) also works on developing self-confidence as girls are equal with male students'.



## Engaging with boys and young men

Efforts to engage with boys and young men largely align with efforts to empower girls. Boys are targeted for awareness-raising sessions alongside girls and also hear messages about the importance of girls' education. Only rarely, though, do boys have access to clubs that focus on gender. While a few schools have 'gender clubs at school level side-by-side with girls' clubs' (educational expert, Community C, South Gondar), no boys we interviewed mentioned participating in these clubs and girls' club leaders were quite clear that they felt it was girls who needed club support. The club coordinator in Community

C, for example, reported that, *'We only recruited and trained female students. It only focuses on female affairs and it is assumed that males' involvement would be an obstacle for our work.'*

By contrast, while tutorials may have been envisioned as a form of support that would help girls more than boys, our research suggests that boys may be more likely to benefit than girls, simply because they are allowed to attend. A 12-year-old boy in Dire Dawa, for example, noted that sessions can really help improve performance for weaker students: *'There is a tutorial class arranged for students to revise what they learn during the regular class. As a result of that, there are students who have highly improved performance.'*



## Supporting parents

Efforts to support parents' engagement with children's learning include awareness-raising activities as well as warnings and monetary or in-kind fines for children's non-attendance in some localities. For example, a teacher in Community A (Zone 5, Afar) observed that in their community, the parent-teacher association (PTA) *'makes the community aware of the importance of education for children... It advises families to send their children to school.'* A key informant in Dire Dawa noted that in urban areas, these efforts are institutionalised:

*Since 2007 EC [2014 Gregorian calendar], the kebele administration has been actively working... to make parents aware to send their children to school. We used to go house-to-house to create awareness among parents.*

Many respondents in East Hararghe spoke of door-to-door, day-after-day efforts to physically track down truant children and bring them to school. A teacher in Community I (East Hararghe), for example, reported that:

*Apart from the regular teaching activity, teachers are also assigned to go to the homes of the students and bring them to school... Every day teachers have to go to their homes in the afternoon to make parents send the children to school.*

In both South Gondar and East Hararghe, respondents noted that the most recalcitrant parents are sometimes fined for refusing to send their children to school. A key informant from the Women's Association in Community D (South Gondar) explained that she works closely with teachers, who *'always notify us when students miss class... We have to penalise mothers who don't send their children to school.'* In Community J (East Hararghe), a kebele

**DD** We don't penalise them financially [parents for their children's non-attendance in school]. We make the fathers build a fence at the school or excavate the place where the latrine will be built. We force them to do those things. If you stop them from doing their own job, they feel it.

(A kebele administrator in Community J, East Hararghe, Ethiopia)

administrator noted that fines in that community typically involve labour contributions:

*We don't penalise them financially [parents for their children's non-attendance in school]. We make the fathers build a fence at the school or excavate the place where the latrine will be built. They also construct a rubbish pit and renovate classrooms. We force them to do those things. We don't ask them to pay in cash. Yes, they bring change. If you stop them from doing their own job, they feel it.*

Two teachers, both in Oromia, reported more in-depth efforts to engage with parents over education. A teacher in Community K (East Hararghe) explained that the PTA in that community focuses not only on simplistic awareness-raising, but *'enhances the relationship between parents and school... [and] discusses and provides solutions to problems in the school, issues related to students and school and parents and school.'* In Batu (East Shewa), a teacher discussed at some length a training programme that had started with teachers, but eventually included parents. Recognising that *'some parents may not be aware where their children spend time... the training focused on how to supervise their children properly.'*



## Engaging with the community

Our research found that efforts to engage with the community often take advantage of existing community meetings and structures to highlight the value of children's education. A religious leader in Community E (South Gondar) explained, *'We used to be given such education in a community meeting at the farmers' training centre. We were being taught about the value of education.'* In Community I (East Hararghe), a kebele administrator reported that efforts in that community included *'a gathering in which all community members participated, including mothers and young people.'*





Adolescents at an SNE school in Ebenat, South Gondar, Amhara © Nathalie Bertrams / GAGE 2019

Recently, we formulated a bylaw. According to the contract agreement, anyone has the right to have education and has to enrol in school. Employers are obliged to send the herdsman to school in a shift that is convenient for them.

(A key informant from a social court in Community E, South Gondar, Ethiopia)

In South Gondar, where commitment to and uptake of education is generally higher, a key informant from a social court in Community E explained that the community is working to ensure that even children working as herders have access to education:

*Recently, we formulated a bylaw. According to the contract agreement, anyone has the right to have education and has to enrol in school. Employers are obliged to send the herdsman to school in a shift that is convenient for them.*



## Strengthening school systems

The government has acted rapidly on its commitment to expanding access to primary education and most children do now have access to primary school – something that was not the case only 15 years ago. That said, expanding access has come at a considerable cost, as most of the

schools to which children have access are ill-equipped to educate them. The change strategies our work identified highlight this tension. While teachers reported that there are a wide variety of ‘strategies to meet the Sustainable Development Goals’ (an educational key informant, Debre Tabor), including a ‘conducive policy environment for girls’ education’ (health extension worker, Batu, East Shewa), we found most efforts on the ground to be ad hoc, unsustainable, and only rarely directed at strengthening school systems.

As noted in the companion report on health, nutrition and sexual and reproductive health, for example, school feeding was mentioned in all three rural zones where we worked. While adolescents often complained about the quality of the food, key informants reported that feeding helped encourage students to attend school – and to be able to concentrate on their lessons. A principal in Community D (South Gondar) explained that ‘students, especially O class and grades 1–4, used to come to school if there is school feeding (porridge) service’. However, a number of key informants commented that school feeding had been recently discontinued, likely because they are in areas where the school feeding was introduced for emergency purposes rather than as the wider national roll out of school feeding.

Economic support – whether from individual teachers, better-off parents in the school community or NGOs – is another change strategy that emerged in our work as

**▶ School children are also taking part in public works by being absent from school, which is a serious problem in this locality though they are not in principle expected to take part in this activity by virtue of being school children.**

(A principal in Community D, South Gondar, Ethiopia)

important in helping some adolescents pursue education. A teacher in Community L (East Hararghe) explained that the school has 'raised a small fund' for two very poor students who were displaced during the conflict between the Oromia and Somali regions in late 2017, to help them afford pens and exercise books. A principal in Debre Tabor (South Gondar) added that in his school, *'there are also some students from better-off families who used to contribute some money for stationery materials for children who could not afford exercise books and pens'*. Key informants and adolescents also mentioned Save the Children and Care, which *'provide educational materials, underwear and sanitary pads for girls'* (principal, Community E, South Gondar), the World Food Programme, which *'brought food and shoes for all 900 enrolled kids'* (teacher, Community I, East Hararghe), and Family Health International, which *'gave us eight exercise books, three pens and a school uniform for this year'* (15-year-old boy, Batu, East Shewa).

The government's flagship social protection programme, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), is a change strategy aimed at reducing poverty and smoothing consumption. However, despite its success in the economic realm, which does include helping parents buy school supplies, there is some evidence – including from the GAGE baseline – that for some families it is counterproductive because it pulls children out of school

(see also Tafere and Woldehanna, 2012). As highlighted by the companion report on economic empowerment, despite regulations that are meant to keep children under the age of 15 years from engaging in public works, some children substitute their own labour for their parent's labour on the programme, while others take over their mother's domestic and care work so that the mothers can work for the PSNP. A principal in Community D (South Gondar) explained:

*School children are also taking part in public works by being absent from school, which is a serious problem in this locality though they are not in principle expected to take part in this activity by virtue of being school children.*

Strategies designed to improve quality of education seem to be rare, with even the teachers in recently scaled-up special needs education noting that training is often short term and insufficient. Outside of special needs education, teacher training was mentioned by only a few key informants – in Zone 5 (Afar) and East Hararghe. They noted that 10th grade graduates who spoke local languages were being hired to teach with only very short-term training. A teacher in Batu (East Shewa) provided the only example of a training programme meant to foster parent–teacher–student relations:

*The quality of education improves when teachers, students and parents work together; these three should come together and work well. We have discussion every two weeks about quality of education – the strengths or weaknesses that we observe at school, and about students' behaviour and attendance. Generally we discuss the teaching and learning process.*

As noted in the companion report on bodily integrity, accountability mechanisms aimed at reducing corporal punishment also appear rare, with the parent–teacher–student groups targeting violence at school basically only setting out which punishments will be meted out for which kinds of misbehaviour.

# Policy and programming implications

Our mixed-methods research findings point to a number of priorities for policy, programming and practice (with further details provided in Annex 1).

- **Support adolescents' educational aspirations:** Whether as part of the main curriculum or through school clubs, adolescents need to be exposed to both practical and aspirational futures – and provided adult guidance to think about the types of support they need to realise their aspirations, where they might get that support, and how they might overcome the barriers they are likely to face over time. Our findings further highlight the value of young people being introduced to a variety of local role models, including those who have continued on to higher education or TVET and others who have built successful businesses. Where possible, role models should include those who have taken non-traditional pathways in terms of gender – encouraging girls and boys to think beyond gender stereotyped roles.
- **Intensify awareness-raising efforts – and education – aimed at parents:** Stepped-up efforts to encourage adult basic education (given that educated parents invest more heavily in their children's education) need to be combined with messaging that simultaneously emphasises the importance of education and offers parents practical guidance on how parents can support their children's – and particularly their daughters' – education (e.g. allowing time for homework, buying school materials and uniforms, avoiding child marriage). Door-to-door efforts to ensure that children are attending school, carried out throughout the school year if necessary, should be paired with warnings and monetary or in-kind fines to ensure compliance. These fines could also be imposed on the adults hiring children to work if they do not allow children to combine work and school.
- **Reconceptualise access to education:** It is not enough for a community to have a building called a school. It must be staffed with decently remunerated, trained teachers, be adequately furnished and appropriately resourced – not just with educational materials but

with school feeding in food insecure areas and WASH facilities too – and welcoming to all students, even those with disabilities who require special accommodations and support. Expanding evening schools in urban areas and, over time, in rural areas, will also support adolescents who have to balance paid and unpaid work responsibilities to pursue further education. In Zone 5 (Afar), and remote rural communities in other regions, where distances keep many students from progressing past second grade, the government should consider aligning the school calendar to the agricultural calendar and at secondary level expanding free or heavily subsidised boarding schools.

- **Focus on learning outcomes:** Students' academic progress is as important as students' access to education. Children's learning should be tracked from the earliest years – rather than simply measured via 8th grade exams given that failure at this juncture in adolescents' schooling can shut off entire pathways for future skills-building, and students should not be promoted before they have mastered content. Tutorials should also be provided to students who are regularly absent or at risk of falling behind to help them catch-up, and offered at flexible hours that are matched to girls' schedules.
- **Teacher violence needs to be urgently addressed:** In the short-term, there should be an immediate end to punishment for 'mistakes' such as lateness and poor retention, which are often beyond students' – and particularly girls' – control and no student should be barred from school or suspended for attendance issues. Over time, teachers need to be trained in non-violent disciplinary approaches and robust monitoring and reporting systems put in place to hold teachers accountable to Ethiopia's policy against corporal punishment.
- **Student violence and harassment needs to be urgently addressed:** Awareness-raising to tackle bullying and sexual harassment, and communication and negotiation skills building needs to be integrated



into the curriculum and reinforced through school clubs so as to promote non-violent communication and behavior among students.

- **Target transitions:** Improve retention as students move from lower-primary to upper-primary school, and from late childhood into early adolescence, by targeting students and parents with outreach efforts that emphasise growth and potential and favourably juxtapose the longer-term advantages of continued education with the opportunity costs of staying in school. Ensure that students with disabilities are

provided with the support that they need to stay in school as they transition into mainstream classroom, including through trained teaching assistants to support mainstream class teachers.

- **Support secondary education:** A multi-pronged package – including building more schools and providing economic and logistical support (such as transportation and safe lodging for rural students who must either commute or board) – needs to be scaled up to meet demand, with care taken to prioritise girls' gender needs given the multiple disadvantages they face.



Adolescent boy at school in Afar © Nathalie Bertrams / GAGE 2019



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# Annex 1: Policy implications

Education capability outcomes	EDUCATION AND LEARNING		
	SDG goals and targets	GoE policy goals	GAGE policy recommendations
Actively support adolescent educational aspirations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that adolescents should be provided with a nurturing, protective and caring framework within which they can develop their talents and become responsible, self-conscious and caring citizens. (ADaP, pp.26)</li> <li>• Ensure educational curriculum to be comprehensive to allow creativity and skills development of children and adolescents... and incorporate extra-curricular activities. (ADaP, pp. 32-3)</li> <li>• Assist adolescents to recognize their capabilities and potentials that could shape their aspirations and their future (ADaP, pp. 34)</li> <li>• Improve the quality of general education in order to motivate children to complete primary and secondary school and provide them with the knowledge, skills and values to become productive and responsible citizens. (ESDP V, pp.35)</li> <li>• Create opportunities for adolescents to build their communication and negotiation skills. (AdaP, pp.30)</li> <li>• Construct training centres where children can develop their talents and learn new skills in the fields of art, sport, science and technology (NCP, pp.18)</li> <li>• Ensure and encourage print and electronic media to incorporate issues that help children achieve full personal, social and cultural development. (NCP, pp.18)</li> <li>• Enhance children's access to up-to-date publications and information that are child friendly and can increase their participation and encourage them to disseminate useful information. (NCP, pp.24)</li> <li>• Broadcast local digital contents focusing particularly on cross-cutting issues and related topics such as environmental protection. (ESDP V pp.114)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include in the school curriculum—and also in school clubs—practical sessions that provide adolescents with opportunities to develop and practice longer-term thinking. Use these venues to expose adolescents to aspirations/goals that are locally and nationally actionable.</li> <li>2. Invest in school guidance counsellors that can provide more tailored support to adolescents about how to set and realise realistic goals.</li> <li>3. Work with parents through Parent/ Teacher/ Student committees to help them support adolescents to envision, plan for, and overcome barriers to realising education and career aspirations.</li> </ol>

Education capability outcomes	EDUCATION AND LEARNING		
	SDG goals and targets	GoE policy goals	GAGE policy recommendations
Promote parental support for education	<b>Goal 5: Gender Equality</b> <b>Target 5.4:</b> Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help parents or guardians to have the necessary awareness on child rights and better parenting skills as well as family planning in order that they give the utmost care to children. (NCP, pp.16)</li> <li>• Mobilize the public to give due attention to children's issues through the celebration of different child-related events and through child-focused programmes. (NCP, pp.22)</li> <li>• Increase the role of media in creating public awareness on children's affairs. (NCP, pp.22)</li> <li>• Create awareness about international, regional and national laws, conventions and policies targeting families, communities, government and non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies. (NCP, pp.22)</li> <li>• Establish and strengthen partnerships among governmental, religious institutions, community coalitions and non-governmental organizations. (NCP, pp.22)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide parents with guidance through Parent/Teacher/Student committees on how to practically support their children's education (e.g equitable chore sharing, equitable purchase of supplies, etc.). Reinforce messages through 1-5 structures.</li> <li>2. Continue to invest in community-level awareness raising as to why education is a smart longer-term investment—messaging must include direct attention to gender and the importance of girls' education. Work with religious and community leaders to reinforce these messages.</li> <li>3. Raise parental awareness about the importance of allowing children (esp. girls) to participate in extra-curriculars (e.g. clubs and tutorials) so that they can maximise the benefits from education.</li> <li>4. Continue supporting and encouraging ABE—as parents with education are more likely to support their children's education.</li> </ol>
Enhance adolescent access to education	<b>Goal 4: Quality Education</b> <b>Target 4.1:</b> Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. <b>Target 4a:</b> Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide all children with access to pre-primary education for school preparedness and access to nearby institutions in which they can complete the full eight years of primary and two years of general secondary education. (ESDP V pp.35)</li> <li>• Increase the completion rate of primary education (1-8 grade) from 52.2% in 2014/15 to 74% by 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Create an enabling environment to further improve access, quality, equity and effectiveness of primary and secondary education. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Investigate options to supply educational materials, school feeding and financial support for children from poor and low income family backgrounds. (ESDP V, p.81)</li> <li>• Ensure orphanages, schools and other facilities that provide different social services to children have child-friendly playgrounds and recreational facilities. (NCP, pp.18)</li> <li>• Increase first cycle (grade1-4) primary school gender parity index from 0.93:1 in 2014/15 to 0.99:1 by 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Narrow the gap in general education participation between rural, urban and emerging regions. (GTP2, p.186))</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue and expand door-to-door on-time enrolment/attendance efforts.</li> <li>2. Incentivise education by providing stipends/supplies/uniforms/school feeding to families and in areas where it is likely to have impact – i.e. the poorest and most food insecure.</li> <li>3. Continue expanding access to upper-primary school—ensuring that even remote areas and pastoralist communities have functioning schools within walking distance.</li> <li>4. Extend efforts aimed at helping students combine unpaid and paid work and school (such as shifts running mornings, afternoons, and evenings and access to non-formal education classes for older or returning students)</li> <li>5. Generate reliable data on the size and shape of the population of children with disabilities (to design programmes and monitor progress) by undertaking a national survey.</li> <li>6. Continue expanding access for those with disabilities—this includes scaling up SNE classrooms in emerging towns and building/retrofitting existent infrastructure to be accessible.</li> </ol>



Education capability outcomes	EDUCATION AND LEARNING		
	SDG goals and targets	GoE policy goals	GAGE policy recommendations
Enhance adolescent access to education	<p><b>Target 4.5:</b> Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an enabling environment for children in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist areas, who need special attention, to get quality education. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Improve the access of pastoralist youth to education through awareness raising, ABE, attending to girls' needs, and providing school feeding. (Youth Development Package, section 3.6)</li> <li>• Create favourable conditions for the rural youth who are unable to get access to formal education or school dropouts to acquire integrated practical education by improving their access to adult education programme. (Youth Development Package, section 3.3)</li> <li>• Ensure the right of all children to learn in their mother tongue. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Create an enabling environment for parents or guardians, especially in rural areas, to have access to adult education as education has a direct bearing on child upbringing. (NCP, pp.16)</li> <li>• Improve the quality of ANFE and create a strong and efficient institutional system for ANFE at all levels. (ESDP V pp.87)</li> <li>• Expand IF AE and continuing education programmes in all regions. (ESDP V pp.87)</li> <li>• Increase primary education (grade 1-8) gross enrolment rate of children with special needs from 4.4% in 2014/15 to 15% by 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Provide inclusive education and accessible service for disabled children. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Implement special needs education strategy to encourage disabled people to fully participate in the country's political, economic and social activities and to provide opportunities of education for children who are out of school and who need to attend special needs education. (GTP II, pp.217)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Consider the use of fines (payable with labour) for parents who do not consistently send their children to school.</li> <li>8. Invest in outreach efforts–aimed at girls, parents (and parents-in-law), and husbands– to keep married girls in school (coupled with access to contraception to avoid adolescent motherhood).</li> <li>9. In Afar and other emerging areas, invest quickly and heavily in building a cohort of local young people who have completed enough education to take on teaching responsibilities (as they will know the language and be able to tolerate the living conditions.)</li> <li>10. Consider aligning the school calendar with the agricultural calendar–so that children are better able to combine seasonal agricultural work with education</li> </ol>

Education capability outcomes	EDUCATION AND LEARNING		
	SDG goals and targets	GoE policy goals	GAGE policy recommendations
Invest in better quality education	<p><b>Goal 4: Quality Education</b></p> <p><b>Target 4a:</b> Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</p> <p><b>Target 4.1:</b> Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Target 4.5:</b> Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an enabling environment to further improve access, quality, equity and effectiveness of primary and secondary education. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Provide adequate teaching and learning materials with a focus on core foundation skills. (ESDP V, p.55)</li> <li>• Critically examine whether all students graduating from each level of education acquires the necessary civic and ethical behaviours set to be required at that level. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Improve the quality of general education in order to motivate children to complete primary and secondary school and provide them with the knowledge, skills and values to become productive and responsible citizens. (ESDP V, pp.35)</li> <li>• Build capacity of school community on healthy adolescent development and participation (ADaP, pp.36)</li> <li>• Strengthen parent, teacher, and student partnership to improve the quality of education oriented towards practical education. (Youth Development Package, section 3.3)</li> <li>• Increase the use of ICT in education by expanding and improving ICT infrastructure at all levels, producing and widely distributing digital education resources and building the ICT skills and capacity of teachers and leaders to support curriculum delivery. (ESDP V pp.55)</li> <li>• Revise curriculum from pre-primary to preparatory secondary education in line with job creation and utilization of technology. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Ensure that schools achieve minimum standards which define the requirements to support effective teaching and learning in a healthy and safe environment; and by supporting community-based school management and decision making. (ESDP V pp.55)</li> <li>• Open up opportunities for children to actively participate in matters affecting them at family, community, school and government levels in accordance with their age and level of maturity. (NCP, pp. 15)</li> <li>• Create favourable conditions for the construction and expansion of facilities of clean water, toilets and waste disposal in order to help children maintain their personal and environmental hygiene. (NCP, pp.17)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immediately ban corporal punishment–beginning with clear guidance to teachers and pupils about positive disciplinary approaches to tackle “offences” that are beyond students’ control (e.g. coming late to school, not understanding lessons).</li> <li>2. Provide clear guidance to Parent/Teacher/ Student committees about positive disciplinary approaches and set up confidential reporting systems to monitor violations.</li> <li>3. Invest in better teacher training and refresher training –including child friendly pedagogies, positive disciplinary approaches and special needs education.</li> <li>4. Invest in attentive and committed teachers by increasing salaries or providing incentives based on student and parent review– and ensure that teachers are teaching classes for which they were trained.</li> <li>5. Continue working towards smaller class sizes to support efforts to facilitate classroom management</li> <li>6. Step up resourcing, especially in rural areas, regarding learning materials (desks, books, ICT, etc.).</li> <li>7. Focus on learning outcomes from the earliest years and use tutorials to enhance student learning where necessary.</li> <li>8. Tie grade promotions to learning outcomes rather than the child’s age/size.</li> <li>9. Expand access to WASH–all schools need water and toilets that are disability and gender-sensitive (e.g. include spaces for menstrual hygiene management).</li> </ol>

Education capability outcomes	EDUCATION AND LEARNING		
	SDG goals and targets	GoE policy goals	GAGE policy recommendations
Support secondary and post-secondary education transitions	<p><b>Goal 4: Quality Education</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.1:</b> Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Target 4.3:</b> Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university</p> <p><b>Target 4.5:</b> Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase expansion of secondary schools. (GTP II, pp.188)</li> <li>• Increase secondary education enrolment rate from 40.5% in 2014/15 to 79% by 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Create an enabling environment to further improve access, quality, equity and effectiveness of primary and secondary education. (NCP, pp.17)</li> <li>• Increase number of TVET institutions from 1,329 in 2014/15 to 1,778 by 2019/20 through the expansion of government, private and non-government TVET, including at least one TVET in each Woreda. (GTP II, pp.187)</li> <li>• Provide competent TVET graduates from formal and short-term training courses to meet market demand (ESDP V pp.100)</li> <li>• Emphasise improving achievements in science and mathematics degree courses. (GTP II, pp. 187)</li> <li>• Bridge the gender parity gap in educational participation. (NCP, p.18)</li> <li>• Improve secondary school second cycle (grade 11-12) gender parity index (girls to boys ratio) from 0.85:1 in 2014/15 to 0.92:1 by 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.186)</li> <li>• Increase % of female students from 32% in 2014/2015 to 45% by the end of 2019/20. (GTP II, pp.187)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue building secondary schools and ensuring that they are accessible to those in rural areas.</li> <li>2. Address cost barriers by providing stipends/supplies/uniforms/transport as appropriate.</li> <li>3. Address opportunity cost barriers by ensuring that adolescents can combine education and work (rotating shifts and evening school).</li> <li>4. Invest in affordable boarding hostels with good security and safeguarding provisions so as to assure parents that their girls can safely attend secondary school in urban areas.</li> <li>5. Provide supplementary programming in 7th grade for the 8th grade exams, to improve students' odds of passing– and in 9th and 10th grades to help rural students catch-up so that they can pass the 10th grade exams that allow access to either preparatory school or TVET.</li> </ol>

# Annex 2: Quantitative data baseline results

Annex Table 1: Education and Learning (Young Cohort), Gender and Disability

	Overall				Gender				Disability Status			
	Sample Size	Mean	Min	Max	Male	Female	% Diff (F-M)		No Disability	Disability	% Diff (D-NoD)	
					Mean	Mean			Mean	Mean		
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	5446	94%	0	1	95%	93%	-2%	X	95%	85%	-10%	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	97%	0	1	97%	96%	-1%	X	97%	93%	-5%	O
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/Religious Training	5446	71%	0	1	73%	68%	-6%	X	71%	53%	-26%	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	75%	0	1	76%	73%	-4%	X	75%	57%	-24%	X
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some University	5446	61%	0	1	62%	59%	-5%	X	61%	42%	-32%	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	66%	0	1	67%	64%	-4%	O	66%	46%	-31%	X
=1 if Holds a Leadership Position at School (among enrolled)	4637	14%	0	1	15%	14%	-4%		15%	8%	-44%	X
=1 if Enrolled in School During Most Recent Session	5611	84%	0	1	86%	82%	-4%	X	85%	62%	-27%	X
=1 if School Has Menstrual Facilities (females only)	2245	6%	0	1	--	6%	--		6%	4%	-36%	
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	5111	98%	0	1	98%	98%	0%		98%	98%	0%	
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/Religious Training	5111	83%	0	1	84%	81%	-3%	X	83%	75%	-10%	X
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some University	5111	67%	0	1	69%	66%	-4%	O	68%	55%	-19%	X
Fraction of days missed that school was in session in last two weeks (among enrolled)	4313	13%	0	1	13%	14%	1%		13%	17%	26%	
Highest Grade Attended	5610	4.57	0	14	4.59	4.54	-1%		4.61	3.25	-30%	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4643	4.98	1	14	4.99	4.97	0%		4.99	4.38	-12%	X
Age of enrollment in Grade 1 (among those who ever enrolled in Grade 1)	4843	7.25	4	13	7.25	7.24	0%		7.23	7.82	8%	X
=1 if Feels Comfortable Speaking Up in Class (among enrolled)	4642	81%	0	1	82%	80%	-3%		81%	65%	-20%	X
Education Attitudes and Norms	5435	4.10	0	9	4.20	4.00	-5%	X	4.09	4.66	14%	X

Notes: This table summarizes information from GAGE baseline data collection in Ethiopia (2017-2018). Means are weighted to make results representative of the study areas. Differences between subgroups that are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  are denoted with an X, while those that are statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$  are denoted with an O. Disability is defined using questions from the Washington Group and includes difficulty in six core functional domains (seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, cognition, and communication). The attitudes and norms index is a sum across several attitudes and norms statements, where for each statement respondents were assigned a '1' if they agreed or partially agreed and a '0' if they disagreed (in cases where agreement suggested a gendered response), and the reverse if agreement suggested a non-gendered response. Thus, higher values of the index indicator more gendered attitudes and norms.



Annex Table 2: Education and Learning (Young Cohort), Location

	Overall		Urban/Rural				Rural Location				Urban Location			
	Sample Size	Mean	Urban	Rural	% Diff (R-U)		South Gondar	East Hararghe	Afar	Sig Dif?	Debre Tabor	Dire Dawa	% Diff (DD-DT)	
							Mean				Mean			
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	5446	94%	98%	94%	-4%	X	96%	94%	84%	X	98%	98%	0%	
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	97%	98%	97%	-1%		98%	97%	92%	X	98%	98%	-1%	
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/ Religious Training	5446	71%	89%	68%	-23%	X	73%	66%	60%	X	92%	86%	-7%	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	75%	89%	73%	-19%	X	75%	71%	68%		93%	86%	-8%	X
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some University	5446	61%	86%	58%	-32%	X	61%	59%	37%	X	88%	84%	-5%	
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4578	66%	86%	63%	-27%	X	64%	63%	50%		90%	84%	-7%	O
=1 if Holds a Leadership Position at School (among enrolled)	4637	14%	22%	13%	-38%	X	15%	13%	5%	X	22%	22%	-1%	
=1 if Enrolled in School During Most Recent Session	5611	84%	96%	83%	-14%	X	92%	78%	63%	X	97%	96%	-1%	
=1 if School Has Menstrual Facilities (females only)	2245	6%	15%	5%	-68%	X	7%	3%	0%	X	12%	18%	57%	
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	5111	98%	99%	98%	-2%	X	99%	97%	95%	X	100%	99%	-1%	
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/Religious Training	5111	83%	98%	81%	-17%	X	86%	77%	78%	X	97%	98%	2%	
=1 if Female Caregiver Aspiration for CR Schooling is At Least Some University	5111	67%	94%	64%	-32%	X	74%	60%	40%	X	93%	95%	2%	
Fraction of days missed that school was in session in last two weeks (among enrolled)	4313	13%	6%	15%	141%	X	12%	17%	24%	X	5%	7%	54%	X
Highest Grade Attended	5610	4.57	5.46	4.46	-18%	X	4.53	4.80	2.44	X	5.52	5.41	-2%	
Among those enrolled during most recent session	4643	4.98	5.58	4.90	-12%	X	4.74	5.25	3.74	X	5.64	5.52	-2%	
Age of enrollment in Grade 1 (among those who ever enrolled in Grade 1)	4843	7.25	6.90	7.29	6%	X	7.70	6.79	8.20	X	6.87	6.92	1%	
=1 if Feels Comfortable Speaking Up in Class (among enrolled)	4642	81%	91%	79%	-12%	X	83%	76%	75%	X	90%	91%	1%	
Education Attitudes and Norms	5435	4.10	3.21	4.21	31%	X	3.89	4.20	5.71	X	3.16	3.25	3%	

See note in Annex Table 1

**Annex Table 3: Education and Learning (Old Cohort), Urban Only**

	Overall				Gender			Disability Status				Urban Location				
	Sample Size	Mean	Min	Max	Male	Female	% Diff (F-M)	No Disability	Disability	% Diff (D-NoD)	Debre Tabor	Dire Dawa	Adami Tulu/Batu	Sig Diff?		
					Mean							Mean				
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	1318	99%	0	1	98%	99%	0%	99%	97%	-2%	99%	98%	99%			
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1182	99%	0	1	99%	99%	1%	99%	96%	-4%	100%	98%	100%	O		
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/Religious Training	1318	89%	0	1	90%	89%	-1%	89%	83%	-7%	94%	87%	87%	X		
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1182	91%	0	1	92%	91%	0%	92%	88%	-4%	96%	89%	90%	X		
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some University	1318	86%	0	1	87%	85%	-3%	86%	77%	-11%	91%	84%	83%	X		
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1182	89%	0	1	89%	88%	-1%	89%	83%	-7%	93%	87%	87%	X		
=1 if Holds a Leadership Position at School (among enrolled)	1185	24%	0	1	26%	23%	-11%	25%	23%	-8%	31%	24%	21%	O		
=1 if Enrolled in School During Most Recent Session	1333	89%	0	1	91%	87%	-4%	X	89%	79%	-11%	O	94%	84%	89%	X
=1 if School Has Menstrual Facilities (females only)	571	38%	0	1	--	38%	--		38%	40%	4%		21%	44%	46%	X
Fraction of days missed that school was in session in last two weeks (among enrolled)	1072	7%	0	1	8%	7%	-15%		7%	10%	38%		4%	9%	8%	X
Highest Grade Attended	1333	9.35	0	15	9.37	9.33	0%		9.40	8.01	-15%	X	9.97	9.03	9.17	X
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1186	9.65	1	15	9.57	9.71	1%		9.68	8.82	-9%	X	10.13	9.60	9.38	X
Age of enrollment in Grade 1 (among those who ever enrolled in Grade 1)	1284	7.13	4	16	7.05	7.19	2%		7.10	8.01	13%	X	7.05	7.09	7.19	
=1 if Feels Comfortable Speaking Up in Class (among enrolled)	1184	80%	0	1	79%	80%	0%		80%	71%	-11%		86%	90%	69%	X
Education Attitudes and Norms	1322	2.50	0	9	2.56	2.45	-4%		2.47	3.20	30%	X	2.44	2.54	2.50	

See note in Annex Table 1

Annex Table 4: Education and Learning (Old Cohort vs. Young Cohort), Urban Only (Debre Tabor and Dire Dawa Only)

	Overall				Age				Gender					
	Sample Size	Mean	Min	Max	Old	Young	% Diff (Y-O)		Old Males	Old Females	% Diff (OF-OM)	Young Males	Young Females	% Diff (YF-YM)
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Secondary	1707	98%	0	1	98%	98%	-1%		99%	98%	-1%	98%	97%	-1%
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1595	98%	0	1	99%	98%	-1%	O	99%	99%	0%	98%	97%	-1%
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some Vocational/Teacher/Religious Training	1707	90%	0	1	91%	89%	-2%		91%	90%	0%	91%	87%	-5%
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1595	91%	0	1	93%	89%	-3%	X	92%	93%	2%	91%	88%	-3%
=1 if Aspiration for Schooling is At Least Some University	1707	87%	0	1	87%	86%	-2%		88%	87%	-1%	89%	83%	-6%
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1595	88%	0	1	90%	86%	-4%	X	90%	90%	1%	88%	84%	-4%
=1 if Holds a Leadership Position at School (among enrolled)	1597	25%	0	1	28%	22%	-21%	X	25%	29%	15%	19%	25%	29%
=1 if Enrolled in School During Most Recent Session	1721	93%	0	1	89%	96%	9%	X	91%	87%	-4%	O	98%	94%
=1 if School Has Menstrual Facilities (females only)	689	24%	0	1	32%	15%	-54%	X	--	32%	--	--	15%	--
Fraction of days missed that school was in session in last two weeks (among enrolled)	1467	6%	0	1	6%	6%	-7%		6%	7%	20%	5%	7%	22%
Highest Grade Attended	1721	7.45	0	15	9.49	5.46	-43%	X	9.69	9.35	-3%	X	5.68	5.23
Among those enrolled during most recent session	1599	7.61	1	15	9.88	5.58	-44%	X	9.89	9.87	0%		5.74	5.40
Age of enrollment in Grade 1 (among those who ever enrolled in Grade 1)	1652	6.98	4	16	7.07	6.90	-2%	X	6.96	7.15	3%		6.77	7.03
=1 if Feels Comfortable Speaking Up in Class (among enrolled)	1598	90%	0	1	88%	91%	3%		90%	87%	-3%		91%	90%
Education Attitudes and Norms	1692	2.85	0	9	2.49	3.21	29%	X	2.59	2.42	-6%		3.46	2.94

See note in Annex Table 1

# Annex 3: GAGE Ethiopia research sites

Annex Table 5: Urban and rural sites

Regional State	Zone	Urban sites	Rural districts (woredas)				
		10-12 year old cohort	10-12 year old cohort	Communities (kebeles) in-depth sites		Communities (kebeles) light-touch sites	
		15-17 year old cohort		Close to district town	Remote	Close to district town	Remote
Afar <sup>1</sup>	Zone 5		Dalifage Dewe Hadelela <b>Semurobi</b> Telalak	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>		
Amhara <sup>2</sup>	South Gondar		<b>Ebenat</b>  Lay Gayint Libo Kemkem Simada Tach Gayint	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b> <b>G</b>
		<b>Debre Tabor (zonal town)</b>					
Dire Dawa City Administration		<b>Dire Dawa (one of Ethiopia's largest cities)</b>					
Oromia <sup>3</sup>	East Hararghe		Babile <b>Fedis</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b> <b>L</b>
	East Shewa	<b>Batu (district town)</b>	Gursum Haramaya Jarso Adami Tulu Jido Kombulcha				

<sup>1</sup> An 'emerging' region which is largely pastoralist (nomadic and agro pastoralist); Afar ethnic group represents estimated 1.7% population. Note the quality of the data for Afar on age of marriage is believed to be problematic, in part at least due to limited numeracy among respondents.

<sup>2</sup> Amhara ethnic group represents estimated 27% of population

<sup>3</sup> Oromo ethnic group represents estimated 34% of the population

**Bold** = sites where qualitative research was carried out.



Annex Table 6: Research sites

Regional State	Zone	Urban sites	Rural districts (woredas)	Food security hotspot ranking <sup>4</sup> (July 2016)	Child marriage for girls 10-14 <sup>5</sup>	CM for girls 15-17 <sup>6</sup>
		10-12 year old cohort 15-17 year old cohort	10-12 year old cohort			
Afar	Zone 5				4.3%	6.3%
			Dalifage	1	7.9%	7.7%
			Dewe	1	2.3%	4%
			Hadelela	1	3.6%	5.5%
			<b>Semurobi</b>		<b>6.7%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>
			Telalak	1	1.9%	5.2%
Amhara	South Gondar		<b>Ebenat</b>	<b>1</b>	9.8%	29.4%
			Lay Gayint	1	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>36.9%</b>
			Libo Kemkem	n/a	7.1%	25.4%
			Simada	n/a	10.3%	32%
			Tach Gayint	1	11.6%	33.8%
				1	7.1%	25.3%
		<b>Debre Tabor</b>		n/a	8.9%	8.7%
Dire Dawa City Administration		<b>Dire Dawa</b>		1	12.6%	14.8%
Oromia	East Hararghe				15.2%	32.3%
			Babile	1	18.7%	41.7%
			<b>Fedis</b>	1	21.9%	53.1%
			Gursum	1	15.1%	28.3%
			Haramaya	1	21.6%	38.3%
			Jarso	1	15.1%	23.3%
	East Shewa	<b>Batu</b>	Adami Tulu Jido Kombulcha	1	10.3%	14.7%

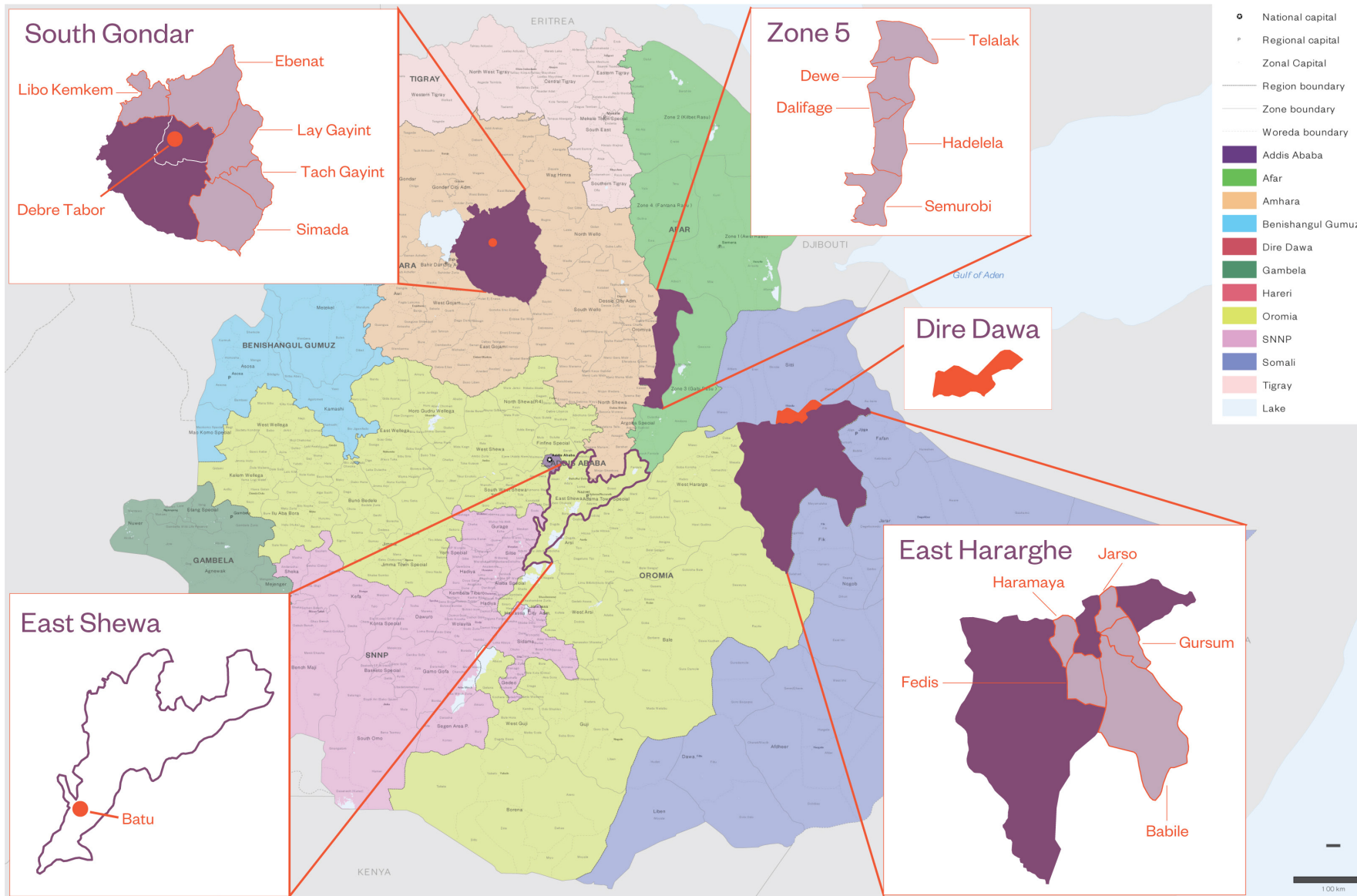
4 434 woredas graded across multiple domains and then collapsed into a ranking 1–3 in terms of food (in)security – 1 is highest level of food insecurity (<https://data.world/ocha-ethiopia/76029294-3cbc-4bd0-8786-adcdb6475886>).

5 As reported by the 2007 census

6 As reported by the 2007 census

**Bold** = sites where qualitative research was carried out.

Figure 13: GAGE Ethiopia research sites broken down by region and woreda



Source: Based on the OCHA/ReliefWeb administrative map of Ethiopia (August 2017) and modified to show the GAGE research sites

# Annex 4: Research ethics, sample and methods

The information below supplements the methodology section in the main text.

## Research ethics

The key principles underpinning GAGE's approach to research ethics are as follows: (1) avoiding harm and protecting the rights of individuals and groups with whom we interact; (2) ensuring that participation in research and evaluation is voluntary and based on fully informed consent for adults and informed assent for adolescents 17 years ; (3) assuring the confidentiality of any information provided; and (4) having clear referral mechanisms in place for any adolescents identified by researchers as being at risk. Operationally, the Overseas Development Institute's Research Ethics Committee is the UK 'Institutional Review Board [IRB] of record' and George Washington University is the US 'IRB of record'. For Ethiopia, the study design was approved by the George Washington University Committee on Human Research, Institutional Review Board (071721), the ODI Research Ethics Committee (02438), the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI/DP/00689/10), and the Addis Ababa University College of Health Sciences Institutional Review Board (113/17/Ext). In addition, for the qualitative research we secured approval from regional government ethics committees in Afar, Amhara and Oromia Regional States.

## Community level sampling approach

In the case of the qualitative research, which involved a sub-sample of the quantitative research sites, we selected one rural district from each region, one remote and one proximate community for in-depth exploration, as well as three other sites where we undertook more light-touch data collection, (i.e. focus group discussions with community members and adolescents, and a limited number of individual interviews with adolescents), to gain some insights about communities that will, over time, see the implementation of distinct components of Act with Her's multi-arm programme design. Finally, although most of the qualitative research sample was selected from the randomised quantitative sample lists to achieve a balance of adolescents of different ages (10, 11, 12, etc.) and gender

of the household head (approximately 20% were from female-headed households, which is approximately in line with the national average, 74% were male, and 6% were child-headed households), we also purposely selected especially disadvantaged adolescents.

## Quantitative methodology

### Data collection and research instruments

The baseline quantitative data collection activity was conducted by experienced survey enumerators with local language skills hired by the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI). In addition to the sampling at regional, zonal and district level described above, to select communities or kebeles, we adopted a 'leave no one behind lens' in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda and categorised kebeles in all selected districts according to their level of geographic remoteness: (1) close to a town so having better access to infrastructure and services; (2) middling access; and (3) remote communities. In the absence of online data at the federal level, we determined this through key informant interviews during scoping visits prior to fieldwork.

To generate the GAGE quantitative research sample, a door-to-door listing activity was undertaken in all urban and rural research sites, following a specific protocol to ensure that the sample was consistently drawn across sites and to minimise the risk of overlooking particularly disadvantaged adolescents (e.g. those not enrolled in school, married adolescents and adolescents with disabilities). The listing activity identified adolescents aged 10–12 and 15–17 (urban sites only) living in the research sites, and the GAGE quantitative research sample was drawn randomly from this population. With assistance from and in collaboration with the qualitative research team, the EDRI survey enumerators also identified other marginalised adolescents in the community, and included them in the research sample as purposely selected respondents.

Once the GAGE quantitative research sample had been identified, EDRI survey enumerators administered face-to-face surveys covering all six GAGE to selected adolescents (the core respondent module) and their adult female caregivers (the adult female module), as well as adult male

caregivers (the adult male module) in a representative subset of households. Female researchers interviewed female adolescents, and male researchers interviewed male adolescents so that young people were able to talk more freely, especially about more sensitive issues such as relationships, puberty, sexual and reproductive health, attitudes, violence, and harmful traditional practices. Enumerators were trained extensively in the wording of the questions, as well as how to appropriately interact with adolescents. Additional interviews were conducted with key community respondents (such as kebele officials, school administrators, and health centre staff) in order to collect additional information on the research sites (the community questionnaire). This process resulted in 6,752 surveys in Ethiopia.

## Data analysis

Analysis of the quantitative survey data has focused on a set of indicators from each of the six capability areas identified by GAGE as pivotal for adolescents. Results are explored overall as well as across gender, age, geographic region, and disability status. The analysis uses sample weights that reflect the probability of being included in the study sample.

## Qualitative methodology

### Data collection and research instruments

The qualitative data collection was undertaken by a team of researchers with local language skills in each region; where local researchers were less experienced, more experienced researchers paired up with local language speakers. As with the quantitative data collection, female researchers interviewed female adolescents, male researchers interviewed male adolescents. We sampled a total of 240 nodal adolescents (approximately 15 per six main urban sites and 20 adolescents per six main rural sites, and the remainder in additional impact evaluation programming sites) with the aim of reaching saturation.<sup>1</sup>

The qualitative research team worked closely with local community facilitators to identify key informants and focus group respondents. This facilitated access as well as trust in the research process.

The nodal adolescent respondents were selected predominantly from the quantitative community lists described above, but purposive efforts were made to identify more adolescents with disabilities (approximately 15% of our sample), those who had been married as children (approximately 15% of our female sample) or out-of-school adolescents in communities where the random list did not yield adequate numbers of adolescents. Please see the GAGE Research Design, Sample And Methodology report for more information on the nodal sample (Jones et al. 2019).

In terms of research instruments, we drew on interactive tools aimed at starting our conversation with the nodal adolescents by focusing on things they prioritise or deem meaningful in their lives. We also explored the services they access in their communities, and their family and social networks. Table 1 provides an overview of the tools and their purpose.

## Data analysis

The data analysis process has followed multiple steps. Preliminary analysis took place during both daily and site-wide debriefings with the team where we explored emerging findings and probed any surprising findings or emerging patterns during the fieldwork process. This also helped to inform the development of the thematic code book.

Following data collection, all interviews were transcribed and translated by native speakers of the local language, and then coded using the qualitative software analysis package MAXQDA. The code book we developed was shaped around the GAGE 3 Cs conceptual framework (capabilities, contexts and change strategies) but given the breadth of the framework, still allowed for local specificities to be incorporated.

<sup>1</sup> Guest et al., 2006 suggests that six individuals of any one social group is typically enough to reach research saturation in a given community i.e. after which additional insights generated are increasingly limited. We used this heuristic in our sampling in each site, then added additional especially disadvantaged adolescents to make up our total sample size.



**Annex Table 7: GAGE Ethiopia baseline instruments disaggregated by individual and group-based activities**

Individual instruments		Girls	Boys	Parents	Community Leaders	Service providers
<b>A few of my favourite things</b>	To use objects that are meaningful in an individual adolescent's life as an entry point to explore his or her perceptions and experiences across the six GAGE capability domains	140	100			
<b>Social support network quadrant</b>	To systematically explore who adolescents are able to turn to within their families and social networks for support and advice and why, as well as who they tend to avoid spending time with and why					
<b>Worries exercise</b>	To understand what are the predominant concerns in adolescents' lives and how they cope/ the extent to which they are able to be resilient in the face of these concerns					
<b>Parents' life histories</b>	To understand the life trajectories of parents of nodal adolescents and the ways in which these have shaped their approach towards and experience of parenting an adolescent			200		
<b>Key informant interviews</b>	To explore regional/woreda/kebele government officials', community leaders' and service providers' understandings of adolescent vulnerabilities and needs, and the extent to which existent programming is addressing these					160
Group instruments	Objective	Girls	Boys	Parents	Community Leaders	Service providers
<b>Social norm mapping discussions with parents</b>	To explore norms and practices related to more culturally sensitive adolescent-related issues, including migration, sexual and reproductive health, and disability			16 groups (128)		
<b>Community timelines</b>	To establish a timeline of the village/town/city in order to situate the individual findings				14 groups (112)	
<b>Body mapping</b>	To explore with younger adolescents norms and attitudes that shape adolescent transitions	9 groups (72)	9 groups (72)			
<b>Community mapping</b>	To understand adolescents' access to mobility and safe spaces, in their communities and beyond, including following migration	15 groups (120)	15 groups (120)			
<b>Vignettes exercises</b>	To explore more culturally sensitive age- and gender-related norms, including migration, disability, SRH	10 groups (80)	10 groups (80)	15 groups (120)		
<b>Total</b>		<b>784 adolescents</b>			<b>720 adults</b>	





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## **About GAGE**

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a nine-year longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit [www.gage.odi.org.uk](http://www.gage.odi.org.uk) for more information.

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