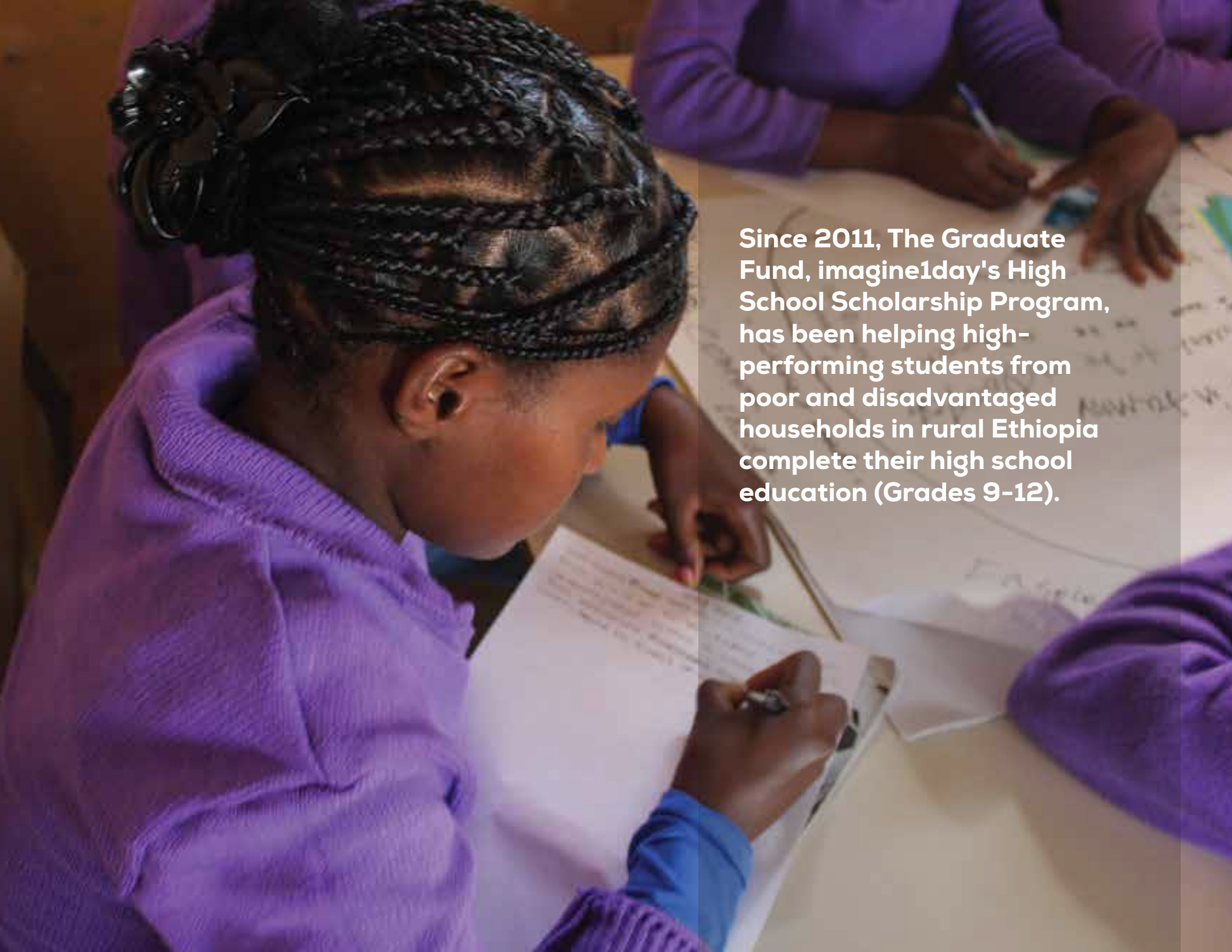




# THE GRADUATE FUND

2011-2013 REPORT



Since 2011, The Graduate Fund, imagine1day's High School Scholarship Program, has been helping high-performing students from poor and disadvantaged households in rural Ethiopia complete their high school education (Grades 9-12).



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## THE CHALLENGE

Since imagine1day started working in Ethiopia in 2007, we've been focused on ensuring that all girls and boys have access to a quality primary school education. But what happens to children who are too far away from their nearest high school to continue on and complete their education? In the remote communities of Tigray, a region in northern Ethiopia, this was the plight for many of the brightest kids attending imagine1day's primary schools. Most villages don't have high schools within walking distance, so students have to travel to the nearest town if they want to study past Grade 8. If the distance is too great for a daily commute, they have to relocate, which means parents need to find the resources to pay for their children to live on their own.

Unfortunately, many parents from rural communities simply can't afford to pay for their kids' transportation, rent, living expenses, household furnishings and school fees for four years of high school—especially if they have many children. The lucky ones have friends and relatives to stay with in town during their studies. The rest are left behind.

As a result, the Ethiopian government reports that only 19.4% of school age children were attending Grades 9 and 10 in 2012/13, and an abysmal 5.3% of school-age children were attending Grades 11 and 12.



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## THE GAME PLAN

Unlike other scholarship programs, imagine1day's Graduate Fund program isn't about aid; it's about independence. We don't just help students complete their secondary education, we also help their parents or guardians start their own business to fund their child's high school education. After a student's first year of high school (Grade 9), their families are equipped to pay for the rest of their studies (Grades 10 – 12) entirely on their own using the income they generate with the support of seed funding and business skill training provided by imagine1day. Here is an overview of what makes our Graduate Fund unique:

### **1. We invest in students and families**

We make a financial investment in each Graduate Scholar and their family. A portion goes directly to pay for the student's expenses and Life Skills Training as well as Business Skill Training for their parents or guardians. Since our Graduate Scholars need to move to the nearest town to attend high school, many of their expenses—like a new mattress and bedding, household equipment—are one-time costs. In Grades 10 to 12 they will only need to cover the costs of rent, stationary supplies, school fees and food. Meanwhile, the family receives seed funding to start their own micro-enterprise. Most families we work with choose to practice animal fattening: our seed funding will allow them to purchase a young oxen or sheep, fatten it for six months and sell it at a profit, allowing them to purchase more oxen or sheep and continue the cycle.

### **2. We help families plan for their future**

Our initial \$690 investment also covers the cost of Life Skills Training for students and Business Skill Training for parents or guardians. Students learn how to live and communicate with their future housemates; parents learn how to start their own business; and the whole family learns how to set goals and save for their future.



### **3. It's not charity—it's a loan**

Unlike other scholarship programs, the Graduate Fund doesn't just give families money with no strings attached. These scholarships are actually loans. At the end of each school year, one third of the loan is forgiven provided the scholarship recipient continues their education. As a result, parents have a financial incentive to keep their kids in school until they graduate. At the end of four years of high school, students graduate with knowledge, confidence and choice, 100% of the loan is forgiven, and families have a burgeoning business to help them achieve their future goals.



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## OUR RESULTS

### Student Outcomes

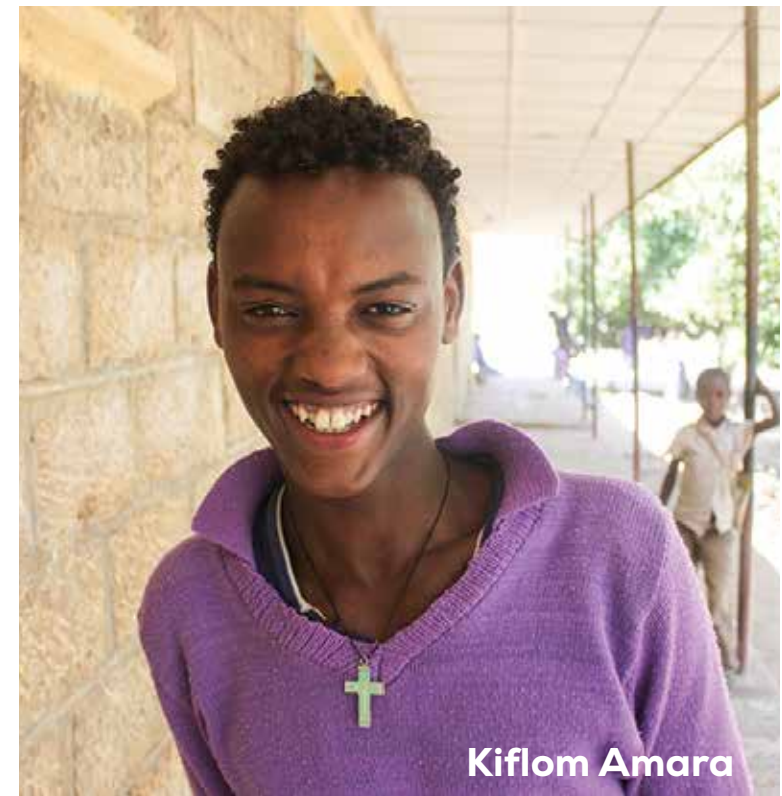
Since 2011, our Graduate Fund has helped 118 students attend high school.

- 21 Class of 2015 Graduate Fund Students
- 37 Class of 2016 Graduate Fund Students
- 60 Class of 2017 Graduate Fund Students

For all Ethiopian students, going to high school is a big change. Not only do many have to leave their small villages and move alone to the nearest town to attend high school, but for the first time ever, their education is taught entirely in English. Thus, in addition to providing our scholarship recipients with financial support to help cover their living expenses, they all benefit from tutorial classes in English, Physics and Chemistry funded by imagine1day, and we assist the students in creating study plans so that they can prepare for exams. For most of our students, it's the first time they've lived with electricity at home, and access to a library and a laboratory at school.

Because our Graduate Fund students live together in groups of three to five, they have supportive study partners to keep them motivated throughout the year, and our Life Skills training helps them coordinate chores and communicate well if conflicts arise.

"I am very happy. I get full electrical lights, which I didn't have in my village. I get a chance to study at night. Before in my school there was no library but we have a good library here. We study together and eat together. I feel like I have peace for the first time," says Kiflom Amara, 15, one of our Class of 2017 students.



**Kiflom Amara**

## Here is a summary of our Graduate Fund students' GPAs as of June 2014\*:

GPA SCALE	CLASS 2017	CLASS 2016	CLASS 2015	TOTAL
90-100%	15	4	1	20 Excellent
80-89%	18	5	6	29 Very Good
70-79%	19	12	8	39 Good
60-69%	7	12	2	21 Satisfactory
50-59%		1		1 Fair
Dropped Out		1	1	2
Missed a year of school no GPA	1	1		2
Joined Technical School			2	2
Failed Grade 10 examination			1	1
Passed Away		1		1

\*For the reasons listed below, some students have dropped out of the Graduate Fund program. This explains why we only include the GPA results of 110 students above, although imagine1day has signed up 118 Graduate Fund students since 2011:

- Class of 2017: One student dropped out because of illness last year. She is now better, has re-enrolled in high school and is currently attending Grade 9.
- Class of 2016: One student dropped out for health reasons, and another missed a year of school because she gave birth. This young mother is now continuing her Grade 10 education.
- Class of 2015: One student dropped out because of illness; another failed her Grade 10 National Exam for two subsequent years and is now married; two students joined a technical school and are doing well.



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## OUR RESULTS

### Family Outcomes

While students are busy studying, parents are learning too. Our Business Skills training and seed loans give them a means to provide a better life for themselves and their children.

Most of our Graduate Fund families are focused on animal fattening of some kind. However, some, like Tsehaynesh Belay, also get creative. Tsehaynesh is a widow and the sole guardian and caregiver of her four nieces and nephews. Since her niece Maerg was accepted into imagine1day's Graduate Fund, Tsehaynesh has been slowly building up capital. She started by purchasing goods in town in bulk and selling them at the local market at a profit. She also practices sheep fattening.

Thanks to her efforts, she now makes 2,100 birr a year, which is enough to pay for all of Maerg's educational and living expenses in town. With her aunt's support and encouragement, Maerg finished Grade 10 with a 3.14 GPA and she is expected to graduate in 2016. When we asked Tsehaynesh what her vision is for her niece, she told us: "I hope when she's done high school, that she looks after girls just like her."

Many families are generating sufficient income to cover their children's house rent, educational materials and other monthly expenses. For some other families, running their first business is difficult. In 2013, many families suffered the death of livestock and loss of honey-bee colonies because of drought.



In addition, some students' parents and guardians are quite old, making starting a new business based on animal fattening very physically demanding. As a result, some students have to live more frugally than others until they complete their education.

Imagine1day closely monitors the progress of each student to ensure their well-being and safety and so that we are aware of any risks of dropout. We also spend time with the families of our scholarship recipients and offer them ongoing guidance, support and encouragement with their small business ventures and their efforts to invest in their children's education.



**Tsehaynesh with her niece,  
Maerge**



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## A STORY FROM THE FIELD

### **Yale Selects an imagine1day scholar from 1,200 Applicants**


During the summer of 2014, imagine1day received fantastic news: one of our Graduate Fund students was accepted in the Yale Young African Scholars Program.

The son of farmers, Nigus Hagos Kahsay grew up in a village called Sihet, in the Hintalo-Wajirat district in Tigray. Three years ago, imagine1day selected him to be one of our Class 2015 Graduate Fund students. We gave his family the seed money and training to help them start their own income generating activity so that they could put Nigus through high school.

Last year, this bright 15-year-old finished Grade 11 at the top of his class with a 94.4% average. Thanks to his academic excellence, Nigus was amongst the 100 students selected to participate in the Yale Young African Scholars Program this August. A total of 1,200 outstanding students from 11 African countries applied.

“imagine1day’s support starting from Grade 9 helped me to compete not only with my classmates, but it also helped me to compete with African students and to be a success,” says Nigus.

During the five-day program this August, Nigus learned about global issues, how to strategize solutions, and to make a meaningful impact in the development of his country. He also learned how to apply to university in the United States, which he hopes to attend after he finishes Grade 12 next June.



"I feel very happy and proud of Nigus," says Tirhas Desta, imagine1day's Graduate Fund Supervisor. She was so confident in this student that she rushed to help Nigus submit his application with just one week to meet Yale's deadline.

"I appreciate him for his self-discipline and for his commitment. Nigus is brilliant and super talented. He is a great example for other Graduate Fund students. I hope this program will help him succeed in his vision to become a great young leader."

Nigus' favourite subject is biology. "My future vision is to become a doctor and to make research to invent medicine for HIV/AIDS and other diseases," he says.

**Nigus Hagos Kahsay**

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[www.imagine1day.org](http://www.imagine1day.org) // [info@imagine1day.org](mailto:info@imagine1day.org)



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