

## Focus: Primary education for all ages

Launched last November by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the globally focused Educate A Child programme strives to bring quality primary education to millions of children of all ages.

**There are over two million out of school children in Ethiopia. A lack of infrastructure, early childhood marriage, child labour and, in some cases, a general distrust of formal education are all barriers that prevent children from going to school.**

Thanks to a partnership between Educate A Child (EAC) and imagine1day, an international education-focused NGO, this situation is going to change for at least 21,945 out of school children living in 103 communities in Ethiopia's Bale Zone. Targeting one of the most marginalised areas of Ethiopia, EAC and imagine1day are applying ingenuity to support communities in bringing quality primary education to children of all ages.

In the community of Yadot, imagine1day's impact is already being felt. Sisey and Genet Bekele, aged 15 and 13, used to work as delivery girls for local coffee producers to pay for school supplies: pens, notebooks, and uniforms. They didn't have enough money to eat two meals a day. The girls were about to drop out until Tagene Dame convinced his church to support the girls' studies.

Dame, a religious leader in his community, was one of the first people to participate in imagine1day's Religious and Clan Leaders Training this February.

For the first time ever, imagine1day invited 206 religious and clan leaders in the Bale Zone to talk about gender equity and to analyse what religious texts say about the value of education.

"During the training, there were some



A programme of **education above all**

misunderstandings about formal education and religious education, but in the end we finally agreed that both are important and, more than that, they are complementary," says Dame.

"Previously, I used to believe that if I sent my kids to school, that was the limit of my responsibility. Now I feel like it's my responsibility to make sure my neighbours' kids and my whole community is educated," he says.

With EAC's support, imagine1day is also training hundreds of teachers, school principals, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, and other community leaders in active learning, leadership, educational policy, and income-generating activities.

Saddam Hussein, aged 15, missed one year of school because his parents had to migrate with their cattle when the rains stopped last year. "When we came back, I was angry because they told me not to go to school. They said people who went to school before me didn't get anything, so why should I go?"

Following imagine1day training in February, a member of Betele's PTA went to the Husseins' house and talked to them about the importance of education. Saddam joined in: "I tried to convince them by saying that you didn't

have a chance to go to school, so why don't you give me this opportunity?"

Thanks to the persistence of Betele's PTA members, Saddam's parents agreed to send him back to class, and he is now a proud and determined Grade 3 student. He gets up at 5am and walks 7km – a 90-minute walk each way – to get to school.

EAC, together with imagine1day, is supporting community leaders in removing barriers to education for children of all ages. This project will directly benefit over 74,000 children, educators, and community leaders over the next three years. In the town of Betele, that means Saddam Hussein is one step closer to achieving his personal goal: "Now I am in an early grade, but when I complete high school and university I will be an engineer or an administrator."

[educateachild.org.qa](http://educateachild.org.qa)

### Educate A Child

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