

Ethiopia



Where is Ethiopia?

Ethiopia is a landlocked country situated in the horn of Africa. It is bordered by Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south, Somalia to the east and Djibouti to the northwest.



What is the climate like?

Ethiopia shows a very variable climate. It ranges between extremely cool at high altitude to very hot at lower elevations. There can be showers in February-March but the rainy season is actually mid-June to mid-September. Vegetation is just as varied, with deserts in the east and savannah in the south. Much of the high plateaus and mountains are made up of tropical highland forests and upland grasslands.



Education

68.9% of all boys and 64.0% of all girls are now enrolled into primary schools— the number of schools is steadily growing and many new schools have been built. The average class sizes is 65 pupils per teacher. Few school supplies are available, schools lack pens, books, paper, and most schools don't even have water or useable toilets. Increasing girls' education and women's opportunities can help improve women's health and stabilize population growth.

Quick Facts

- Population: 80 million (UK 2009: 61.8 million)
- Area: 1 million square km (UK: 242,900 square km)
- Life expectancy (years): 52.9 (men) and 58.0 (women).
- Major languages: Oromigna, Amharic and English.
- Major religions: Orthodox Christian, and Protestant, Muslim and Animist.
- Only 24% of Ethiopians have clean water and only 15% have adequate sanitation.
- 31 million people live on less than 30p per day.
- Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa.

People and Culture

The population of Ethiopia is very diverse. The main ethnic groups (and languages) are the Oromo (Oromigna) (32%) and the Amhara (Amharic) (30%). Others include the Gurage, Sidamo, Walaita, Tigre and Somali peoples. Amharic is the official language. English is the main foreign language and is the teaching medium in secondary schools. The traditional cultures of Ethiopia retain much from their ancient past, including the founding of one of the first Christian Kingdoms in the world. They have one of the longest continuous literate traditions in Africa as well as a rich tradition of both secular and religious music, singing and dancing. Singing accompanies many agricultural activities, as well as religious festivals and ceremonies surrounding life's milestones - birth, marriage and death. 'Wat', a spicy stew, and 'Injera', a 60cm diameter pancake made from Teff, are the staple foods.



Poverty

Poverty in Ethiopia affects the majority of the population. 31m people live on less than half a dollar a day and between 6-13m people are at risk of starvation each year.

Only 24% of Ethiopians have access to clean water, and only 15% have adequate sanitation facilities. Health programmes suffer from lack of implementation. The poor state of women's health is also a barrier to development. The government has been successful in distributing mosquito nets to almost all of the 10 million households at risk of malaria. Water related diseases are rife and health services are limited. Incidents of HIV have stabilised.

Economy

Ethiopia is one of the fastest growing non-oil economies in Africa. The economy depends heavily on agriculture and animal husbandry, which is often affected by drought and poor cultivation practices. Coffee is the key export and critical to the economy. Under Ethiopia's Constitution the State owns all the land and provides long-term leases to the tenants, hampering industrial sector growth where owned land would be used as collateral for loans.

Did you know?

- Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries in the world.
- The Ethiopian clock is divided into 12 hours of day and night, so 7am is one o'clock daytime and 7pm is one o'clock night-time.
- The new millennium started in September 2007 according to the calendar of the Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox Church.
- The skull of a 3.3 million year old infant girl was found in the Dakika region.
- The hottest place on earth is the Danakil Desert, Northern Ethiopia.



Self Help Africa in Ethiopia

- Improving access to quality seed potato stock for small-holder farmers.
- Facilitating school links with Irish schools.
- Distributing apple tree root stock, with technical training and pilot apple production assistance.
- Increasing access to water and introducing drip irrigation systems.
- Fuel efficient cooking stove production
- Developing savings and credit co-operatives.