

# Right to education for child domestic workers in Ethiopia

Findings from a large scale study, drawing on a probabilistic sample of 3,171 girls aged 12 to 18, who were working as domestic workers in Addis Ababa

Under the Education and Training Policy (1994) and the National Educational Sector Development Programs, Ethiopian children have the right to 8 years of free and compulsory basic education

This right to education is not being realised nor protected for child domestic workers



**5/8**  
compulsory years of education completed on average



Little to no time for learning, working an average of **55** hours per week



**38%**  
are unable to read basic texts



**54%**  
currently not attending school

**In Ethiopia, children have the right to eight years of free and compulsory basic education** under the Education and Training Policy (1994) and the National Educational Sector Development Programs. To achieve the targets of Education for All and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Ethiopian government has committed to ensuring that girls in particular have access to free and compulsory basic education.

**This right to education is not being protected nor realised for all Ethiopian girls, particularly child domestic workers (CDWs).**<sup>1</sup> Domestic work is one of the most common forms of work among Ethiopian girls and young women, with household data from study areas reporting a 37 percent prevalence of child domestic work among all girls aged 12 to 17. However, this type of work frequently keeps children out-of-school as many girls reported working seven days per week with excessive hours and no days off.

**Excessive working hours must be reduced and allow adequate time for learning.** Without labour protections that restrict working hours, CDWs are denied their right to education. We urge government officials to recognise CDWs under Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 to ensure they have the same legal protections as other child labourers including restrictions on minimum age, limited working hours and required rest days. This will allow more time for CDWs to return to or continue their education.

**Child domestic workers have the same right to education as any other child in Ethiopia.** Free classes, alternative basic education curriculums and early evening classes should be provided to adapt to the needs of CDWs. In addition, endorsing alternative entry requirements that consider skills CDWs may have gained outside of formal schooling will make it easier for out-of-school children to return to school without penalisation. We call on government officials, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the recommendations of this study to protect the right to education for CDWs in Ethiopia.

<sup>1</sup> CDWs include girls who self-identify as domestic workers as well as girls who report a minimum of 14 hours of domestic work undertaken per week and not living with conjugal family members.

## Recommendations

- Recognise domestic work under official labour laws, as well as through the ratification and incorporation of ILO Resolution Convention 189.
- Provide opportunities for alternative basic education (ABE), life skills and financial literacy training in a flexible format adapted to the needs of domestic workers.
- Break the isolation of child domestic workers with safe spaces aimed at: building their confidence, skills and social capital; raising awareness of current laws and policies; and connecting them with support services and entitlements.

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Read the full report at <https://freedomfund.org/eth-cdw2022/>

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