



Damo Sako gives one of her kid goats to another deserving girl.

"I will, from time to time, sell some of my goats to meet all of these needs, and my goats will keep on multiplying. Now I will no longer burden my poor parents, especially my mother who bore most of my burden."

Goats Improve Girls' Education in Ethiopia

It is proven that girls who attain more years of primary education are at less risk for child marriage and early pregnancy, and are more likely to have higher incomes as adults. However, in many parts of Ethiopia, families cannot afford to send their daughters to school.

IIRR began the innovative Goats4Girls (G4G) program to address this exact issue. Girls who are unable to attend school are provided two goats, so they can pay for their education by selling the kids.

Damo Sako is a 16-year-old girl from Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia. She is in Grade 7 at Mucha Primary School. Her father has two wives and 16 children, eight boys and eight girls. She is a very strong student, but at risk of dropping out due to her families economic situation. IIRR selected Damo to be one of the first six beneficiaries of its G4G initiative at Mucha Primary School.

In 2014, she received her allotment of two goats and agreed to pass on the first-born kid to another deserving girl. Her father was supportive of Damo and managed to find a way to give her an additional goat to care for. As her goats gave birth, her herd quickly grew to seven goats, and honoring her agreement, Damo gave her first-born kid to a fellow classmate.

With her growing herd, Damo has completed Grade 8 and hopes to attend a good secondary school after passing her state exam. *"I will be joining a secondary school away from home which requires renting a hostel room. I need to buy clothes, books, and other school and personal supplies. I also need money to buy food,"* said Damo. *"I will, from time to time, sell some of my goats to meet all of these needs, and my goats will keep on multiplying. Now I will no longer burden my poor parents, especially my mother who bore most of my burden."*

The school principal, Awol Bitata, told the IIRR team that, *"this project is a game changer and has boosted girls' performance, which is usually poor. It has also motivated parents to become more supportive of girls' education, which was not the case before. Since the G4G project was started, enrollment in our school has increased by over 30%! There are still many deserving girls who have dropped out of school, and I hope IIRR will keep up its good work."*

One of the unique aspects of this program is that goat recipients are required to pass along one goat to another girl. This doubles the impact of the program without increasing any costs. It also allows the girl and her family to experience the joy of giving, which fosters pride, dignity, and self-worth and creates community cohesion. IIRR aims to enroll hundreds of girls in Ethiopia and other eastern African countries (Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan) in G4G who dropped out of school mainly for economic reasons.

"Our society doesn't value girls and so our parents don't support our education. In our community, all boys are given a gift when they are born, but we girls don't get anything. The goat project is the first live gift we have ever received as girls, and it has restored our dignity and self-worth. It has increased cooperation with our parents, and I feel we are more respected. It motivates us to work even harder in school. I would like to be a teacher and become a role model for many girls who, according to our tradition, marry when they are very young." – Damo Sako



Catherine looking after her goats.

Catherine is a 16 year old student at Pope Paul VI Secondary School in Nwoya District in Northern Uganda. She is being raised by a single, widowed mother and has been sent out of school numerous times because she couldn't pay her school fees. Catherine received two goats from IIRR's Goats for Girls campaign. This is what she says about her goats:

"My goats have given birth, and I gave one kid to my sister so she could also continue with school. I will look after my goats well so that they can help pay for my tuition when I join university. My mother is weak and cannot afford to pay, so the income I receive from the goats will be a huge help. I want to become a doctor and I am looking forward to achieving my dream. Thank you IIRR for the initiative."



Sidonia back to school.

"Am very thankful to IIRR and COPEBA. They gave me a chance to go back to school. I believe with education I will be a better woman in the society and my dream is to serve the people of Western Equatorial as a political representative in the state government."

Ensuring A Bright Future for Pregnant Teens

Sidonia Evasio is 19 years-old and lives in the South Sudan. She hails from Western Equatoria State, a largely agricultural region, which, like the rest of country, faces many challenges following the country's independence in 2011.

As a proud student at Namaiku Primary School, she was hard working and studious. Her parents were very supportive of her education and worked hard to ensure she had everything she needed for her studies.

Sidonia dreamed of a bright future and knew staying in school would provide her the tools to make her goals a reality. This made it all the more devastating when, in 2013, she found out she was pregnant. Her boyfriend refused to help and her parents disowned her. All alone, with a new baby to take care of and no support, Sidonia had little choice but to drop out of school.

In 2014, IIRR provided a local community-based organization, Community Peace Building and Protection Association (COPEBA), with advocacy and facilitation skills to support girls' education. IIRR trained them in advocacy and facilitation skills to support girls' education in the area. COPEBA formed an elders' forum in Sidonia's village, Namaiku, to support girls and young mothers who drop out of school. When the forum learned about Sidonia's situation they met with her parents and discussed the importance of her going back to school and finishing her education. After numerous conversations, Sidonia's parents finally agreed she should re-enroll in school, and her mother even offered to help take care of her baby while Sidonia was in class.

Since that meeting, Sidonia has been thriving and is currently waiting to sit for her national examination that will qualify her for joining secondary school. She is a role model to other young mothers also working to stay in school, and has become an advocate to prevent teen pregnancy in her community. She also joined the Girls for Girls club that IIRR has organized at her school as a champion for girls' education.



Achuka on a wheelbarrow.



Achuka on a wheelchair.

From a Wheelbarrow to a Wheelchair

Achuka Simon lost the use of his legs from polio as an infant, but he never lost his determination and spirit. As a Primary Five student at Acherer Primary School in North Eastern Uganda, Achuka lives approximately 40 minutes from his school, a distance hard enough for an able-bodied student, but even more challenging for one with a disability.

Being born to a very poor family coupled with not being able to walk posed a serious challenge to Achuka. However, he was resolute and determined to get an education. When a local charity gave his family a wheelbarrow to construct a latrine, Achuka saw this as an opportunity for his school transport. He was so eager to start school, that not even beginning Primary One at 9 years old, when most other students start at six years bothered him. For years, his brother graciously pushed him to and from school each day in the wheelbarrow, only missing a day when his family required the wheelbarrow for farm work.

IIRR began an education project in Moroto District in 2015. One of the components was to help Special Needs Children access education. Through this program, Achuka got a wheelchair to help him better get around.

Since receiving his wheelchair, Achuka's academic performance has greatly improved. He went from being one of the lowest performing students in his class to part of the first half. During promotional exams from Primary Four to Five, Achuka was graded 24th out of 42 pupils. He is now 15 years old and a strong believer of "disability is not inability".

IIRR works to ensure children like Achuka get a chance at a better life. In some communities, children with disabilities are considered bad omens and hidden in their homes. IIRR works to break down these stereotypes by engaging parents, schools, and governments, and advocates that all children have equal access to education despite any physical or mental challenges.

Interventions for Special Needs Children have included eye surgery and lenses for the visually impaired, wheelchairs and crutches for children with walking difficulty, and lumber corsets for those with back deformities. Remedial teaching and scholastic materials have also been provided to help students who need extra help catching up to their peers.

"I was excited to get a wheelchair from IIRR, and I can now wheel myself to school, especially if it's not muddy. Other children now support me easily because it is easier to push the wheelchair."



Eddy with his loving grandmother in front of their Manyatta (hut).

A Shepherd's dreams of becoming a lawyer

In pastoralist areas of Kenya, it is common for children to take care of the family's livestock. They spend their days following the herds, and during the dry season, children often migrate with their animals to "foda," or low-lying regions, where grass and water can be found. This makes it extremely challenging for children from pastoralist communities to get an education. IIRR developed shepherd schools - mobile schools and feeder schools - to address the unique educational needs of these children.

Eddy Gabriel Leleur is a shepherd boy from Samburu District in north-central Kenya. By the time he was four, both his parents had died and his elderly grandmother was raising him.

In addition to tending to his herds all day long, Eddy sold charcoal door to door in his village to support his grandmother and himself. Eddy dreamed of attending a formal school, but since he worked during the day this was not possible.

Eddy learned about IIRR's shepherd class designed for herders who could not attend day school. He joined the late afternoon and early evening shepherd class at Loltulelei Primary School, where he finished class 3. He desperately wanted to continue his education in regular schools, but he couldn't get away from the responsibilities to his animals.

When he turned seven years old and was ready to move to grade 4, a severe drought hit the region and all his grandmother's animals died. It was a great economic loss to Eddy and his grandmother, but opened the door for his education. With a herd no longer to care, his grandmother decided to enroll Eddy in school full-time.

Despite many continued challenges, Eddy persevered and was one of the top performers in his grade, scoring 324 (A-) in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), earning him a place in the prestigious Maralal High School. Today, Eddy Gabriel Leleur is a Form One (Grade 9) student at Maralal High School, pursuing his dream to become a lawyer so that he can fight for the educational rights of pastoralist children in Kenya.

There are 22 shepherd schools throughout Samburu County with over 900 students enrolled. Over 600 students have successfully transitioned to formal education, and some of the strongest scholars are now in secondary schools waiting to sit for the Kenya National Secondary Certificate Examination in 2015. During the first quarter of 2015, this program has enrolled 3,243 children who had dropped out of school into shepherd classes and formal primary schools.

There are hundreds and thousands of deserving pastoralist children like Eddy who are denied the opportunity to go to school they like. Through your generous donation to IIRR's Pastoral Education Program, you can guarantee these young people's access to life transforming education