Annual Report

2024 - 2025

Together We Learn

ETHIOPIA

Charity Information

Registered Address

225-229 Seven Sisters Road
London, N4 2DA

Trustees

Nadine Carle-Edgar
Ashley England
Elsabeth Gezahegn King *(until Sep 2025)*
Holly McKenzie
Jack Sharville
Matthew Stockdale

Chief Executive

Caroline Walker

President

Helen Pankhurst CBE

Banker

The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.
P.O. Box 101, 1 Balloon Street
Manchester, M60 4EP

Registration

Registered charity number: 1165953

Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Constitution last amended 8 May 2020

Contents

Welcome **04**

About Us **06**

Access to Education **09**

- Girls' Education 10
- Student Sponsorship 13
- School Construction 18

Quality of Education **22**

- Teacher Training 23
- Kindu Klub 27
- School Linking 28

Children's Wellbeing **30**

- Playgroup 31
- Football Teams 32

Special Thanks **33**

Our Team **35**

Our Finances **37**

The Year in Numbers

117
girls received reusable period packs

69,800
students reached with improved english teaching

367
students sponsored through education

172
food parcels provided for families affected by conflict and high inflation

1,218
teachers trained

800
students learning in new classrooms

Welcome

Thank you for opening Together We Learn's annual report for 2024-25. Despite continued conflict, economic pressure and policy changes, this report is alive with stories of success. Throughout you will find case studies that show how your commitment, generosity and support have enabled children, teachers and communities in Ethiopia to withstand difficult circumstances and come out stronger.

This year, we made notable progress in all areas of our work. More children were able to access education through our longstanding student sponsorship and school construction programmes, and we continue to promote equal access for both girls and boys. We worked to raise the quality of education children receive through training teachers, influencing policy and collaborating with local government. By linking schools in Ethiopia, the UK and US, we ensured that learning goes both ways. We also considered children's wellbeing through clubs, playgroup and sport.

At the same time, our projects have dealt with significant challenges. Conflict, internal displacement, disrupted schooling, transport and construction, rising inflation and poor policy implementation have all affected children's access to opportunities. The impact we've made in this report is a testament to the dedication of our local teams, partners and communities.

One of our proudest achievements of the year has been seeing our teacher training literacy project receive growing national recognition. We use a phonics-based approach to reach tens of thousands of students through trained teachers and the results are heartening. Not only do the children report improvements across all measured skills, they relish the chance to learn English through songs, games and stories. Importantly, we have engaged education bureaus, ministries and local networks at every stage, which has strengthened their recognition and endorsement of the project, and allowed us to contribute to conversations on foundational literacy at the regional, national and international levels! This recognition sets the project up for long-term, widespread and significant impact and reflects years of dedicated delivery and relationship-building on the ground.

Finally, we spent this year considering what comes next for Together We Learn. We developed our Strategic Vision for 2025-2027 and advanced separate but interlinking strategic plans for our organisation and our Ethiopian partner. Both strategies are aimed at our shared ambition to empower a locally-led approach to achieve our mission for quality education in Ethiopia. This Strategic Vision is the first step in a process that we expect will involve years of thoughtfully redesigning processes, strengthening systems and building capacity to eventually shift the power from the UK to Ethiopia.

We are deeply grateful to our supporter, donors, schools, volunteers, staff and friends in the UK and Ethiopia who continue to believe in our work. Your support enables children not only to stay in school, but to learn, thrive and imagine an exciting future.

Amasegenalu - thank you.

Caroline Walker, Chief Executive ♦ Holly McKenzie, Chair of Trustees

About Us

Our vision is for all children in Ethiopia to be able to strive for a brighter future through access to quality education.

Our Mission

Our mission is to break the cycle of poverty by enabling access to quality education for disadvantaged children. We do this by improving the quality of teaching and the quality of facilities within schools and by working with communities to overcome obstacles, enabling children to stay in school.

Our Approach

Our approach to providing access to quality education is holistic, as our experience shows us that there are many areas of need that must be addressed to enable children to make the most of education.

Our work with schools builds safe, local school facilities and supports teachers with training and resources to inspire children to flourish in the classroom.

We also work closely with the children, their families and communities to understand and address the issues they face at home and how these impact their ability to attend and concentrate in school.

Access

We ensure access to education through the construction of school facilities and projects that address barriers to education.

Quality

We improve the quality of education through teacher training and provision of quality educational resources.

Wellbeing

We enable children to flourish through after-school activities and programmes supporting their families at home.

Our Values

Equal

Creating opportunities

Our work is driven by the knowledge that all children have equal potential regardless of the circumstances they are born into.

Collaborative

Together we can transform

We support children and families to transform their lives. Engaging with communities at all stages ensures that our projects are meeting actual needs and making a difference.

Caring

Taking time to look closer

We care about the individual lives of the children and families we serve, even if it makes things more complicated. We recognise that effective solutions aren't 'one size fits all' and that each family is made up of individuals with varied circumstances and concerns of their own.

Respectful

More than a single story

Ethiopia is a diverse and complex country with a rich history and culture. We promote a positive and rounded image of Ethiopia while supporting its development.

Honest

Accountable to communities

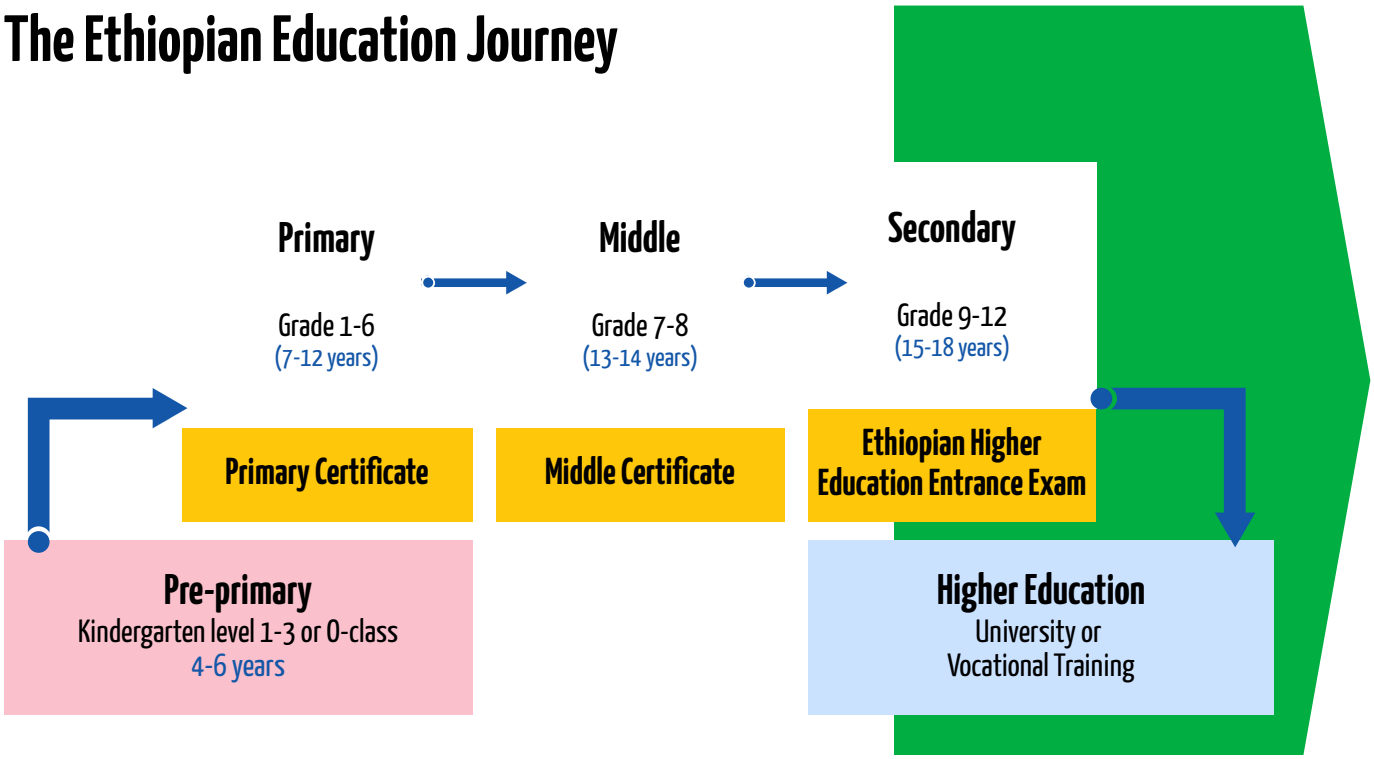
We are transparent and open in our work. By working closely together, communities are able to hold us to account. This means supporters and funders can be confident that we continue to invest donations where they have most impact.

Impact driven

Never too big to learn

We have over 25 years' experience but we have never stopped learning. Each project or activity is an opportunity for us to become more effective. We are not afraid to innovate, but don't feel the need to reinvent the wheel if an approach is effective. We aim to have a significant and lasting impact.

The Ethiopian Education Journey



Access to Education

Together We Learn ensures access to education through the construction of school facilities and projects that address barriers to education.

Girls' Education

Educating girls is vital for social and economic development. Enabling girls to achieve at school has a ripple effect of positive change across communities and through generations. Our girls' education projects help girls overcome obstacles to staying in school so they can achieve their full potential.

Future Girls

Building Confidence, Leadership, and Safer Schools

This year marked the end of the second phase of our two-year Future Girls programme, delivered across six primary schools in the Amhara and Oromia regions. Building on the foundations laid in earlier phases, the programme continued to equip adolescent girls and boys with the knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills to challenge harmful gender norms and create safer, more supportive school environments. Girls Clubs met at least fortnightly, providing a trusted space for open discussion on topics such as gender equality, reproductive health, menstruation, and peer pressure.

Across the year, 98 girls and 66 boys took part as club members, with many stepping into leadership roles. Students led monthly school assemblies, presented poems and essays, and organised Menstrual Hygiene Day events attended by the whole school community. Local media covered several of these events, helping to amplify positive messages and reduce stigma around menstruation. Alongside this, 117 girls received reusable period packs, and small grants enabled schools to make practical improvements such as secure toilet doors, water points, menstrual hygiene supplies, and dedicated resting spaces for girls. In total, 6,700 students benefited from improved facilities.

Teachers, school directors, and government officials also played an active role. Over the year, 12 teachers, six directors and three officials received training on early marriage, reproductive health, and safeguarding, while 18 staff from previous phases joined peer learning activities to share best practice. Parents were increasingly engaged too, with 21 parents participating in awareness sessions.

117
girls received reusable period packs

6,700
students benefitted from improved facilities

98 girls and 66 boys
were involved as club members

The Impact

Monitoring data and an external evaluation by EnableEd show that the programme has had a strong and measurable impact on Girls Club members over the two year phase.

Improved confidence and leadership

By the end of the project, 76% of girls felt proud discussing gender and puberty at school, compared with 22% at baseline, and 64% believed others saw them as leaders. Teachers reported that girls spoke up more in class and led peer discussions with confidence.

Shifts in attitudes among boys

Boys who participated in the clubs increasingly rejected stigma around menstruation, describing it as natural and worthy of support. In one school in Amhara, teachers noted that boys who had previously teased girls began actively supporting them during their periods.

Stronger social and emotional learning

The evaluation highlighted significant gains in confidence, empathy, teamwork, and problem solving among members. These skills are essential for girls who often face pressure to stay silent or leave school early.

A safer environment for girls

Club leaders played a vital role in identifying and supporting girls facing abuse at home. 11 safeguarding cases were identified and supported. In two of these cases, it was the club members themselves who helped the affected girls access protection and support, leading to decisive action by school leaders and local authorities.

Sustainability and peer learning

A key finding of the external evaluation was the sustainability of the model. Clubs in schools supported during earlier phases of the project remain active two years on, with local contributions used to purchase menstrual supplies and students continuing to use the clubs as safe spaces. Peer conferences and best practice visits this year strengthened these networks further, bringing together club leaders, teachers, directors, and officials from both current and former project schools.

> **"You strengthened us to do more with the club, and we have a plan to sustain it with Grade 8 next year and with new members too."**
>
> — Girls Club Leader

A Mother's Business, a Daughter's Future

Providing a business grant to the mother of a female student is an effective way to benefit a household in multiple ways at once. By generating her own income, the mother can achieve greater economic independence and increased confidence, and this income in turn reduces the risk of early drop out for their daughter. This year, we were pleased to support **11 mothers and students** through the establishment of a savings and loan association and business grants.

The mothers received business training at the outset and ongoing support from our team to form their association. Within this group, each woman pays a regular amount into savings, which is then topped up by a grant . The fund is circulated among members, with different women receiving and repaying loans in turn, enabling them to establish and grown their own businesses.

The first grants were distributed in April 2025 and by August 10 women had established new businesses. Most of those reporting profits within the first 10 months had earned profits equal to 98% of their original loan which many invested in smartphones for their children to access online learning.

"The outcome has been very beneficial. Previously, I used to buy things on credit, but now I prepare and sell my own items, which is helpful. I can provide my child with the supplies needed for education. It is very useful"

— Ehitalem ◊ Savings and Loans Association member

Reported 'most valuable aspect' of the project

Student Sponsorship

Our sponsorship programme enables children from low income families to go to school. Our sponsorship model is designed to directly meet the needs of families in a way that most effectively enables children to stay in education.

Our sponsorship model includes direct financial assistance for essential living costs such as rent and food, provision of educational materials, and medical cover. We also implement targeted initiatives to strengthen students' academic performance and promote family engagement, health, and overall wellbeing.

In 2024–25, we supported 367 students, from kindergarten through to university, in Amhara and Oromia. Most of our sponsored families live in Amhara, where prolonged conflict continued to disrupt daily life, while rising inflation placed further pressure on households. Despite these challenges, our sponsorship team provided consistent support to students and their families.

Supporting Families with Positive Parenting

Programme activities began in September 2024 with our annual Family Forums. These gatherings strengthen relationships with families, provide opportunities to gather feedback, and allow us to share information.

In Amhara, parents and guardians attended a session led by a doctor from Gondar Hospital, who shared guidance on common health issues affecting sponsored families. A psychologist also delivered training on effective parenting skills, helping families better support their children's development and wellbeing. Students from our Kindu Klub enriched the event with a poem and musical performance, showcasing their confidence and creativity.

At the forum in Oromia, parents and guardians were introduced to a representative from the One Stop Centre, a free service that supports children and adults who have experienced violence, abuse, or exploitation. The centre provides medical care, psychological support, and legal assistance. At the forum, they also provided guidance on positive parenting and how to support children's learning.

Celebrating academic success remains a central feature of the forums. Students who achieved high academic results in both regions received monetary awards. In Amhara, parents of high-performing students were also recognised, highlighting the vital role families play in their children's education.

Following the forums, families received annual distributions of school materials, including exercise books, pens, uniforms, and shoes. For families living in areas with unsafe travel conditions, funds were transferred so they could purchase required items locally.

Meeting Changing Needs

Over the year, we observed an increase in higher education students at risk of dropping out due to financial pressures. Rising transport costs driven by conflict, alongside the growing use of online learning materials, created new challenges for students unable to afford smartphones, laptops, or printing costs.

In addition to covering tuition fees at state colleges and helping new university entrants with set-up costs, we provided extra financial support to higher education students at risk of dropping out. This assistance helped cover essential expenses enabling them to continue their education.

Holistic Support for Families

Beyond sponsorship, many families received wider support throughout 2024–25. A total of **257 donations** funded home improvements, small business start-ups, additional educational assistance, the installation of water taps and electricity meters, and celebration and birthday parcels, among many other forms of help. These contributions played an important role in supporting household stability and improving the living conditions of sponsored families.

367
students received sponsorship support

92
students were in university or higher education

130
medical cases supported

5
students achieved their certificate of secondary education

13
students moved from primary to secondary education

20
students graduated from university or training courses

172
food parcels were distributed

83
students attended summer tutorials

Expanding and Improving Summer Tutorials

In the summer of 2024, we introduced a tutorial programme in response to regional conflict and its impact on students' learning. Ongoing insecurity and changes within the primary education system meant that the need for additional academic assistance remained high. Following the success of the first tutorials, we were pleased to offer this support again in the summer of 2025.

In the most recent national exams taken at the end of secondary school, only 8.4% of students achieved the minimum score required for university entry. The introduction of a new exam at Grade 6 has also added pressure for younger learners. A revised curriculum, combined with a chronic shortage of textbooks, further hindered students' progress. For many of our sponsored students, who frequently lack access to digital alternatives, the absence of learning materials is particularly challenging.

Questions asked at the motivational talk show the challenges that many of our students are facing, and how motivated they are to positively manage those challenges:

- **"What was your reading style?"**
- **"How do you choose the right friends?"**
- **"At what age did you lose your mother, and how did you manage life afterward?"**

The summer tutorials supported students entering exam years and helped them prepare for the academic year ahead. **88 students** attended lessons delivered by experienced teachers four days a week over eight weeks. We expanded the number of subjects covered from three to eight, adding Citizenship, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and History, to Maths, English, and General Science. Drinks and snacks were provided daily, along with exercise books and pens, and transport costs were covered for students from certain areas, to enable safe and consistent attendance.

Students' performance showed a strong upward trend, with significant progress between the tests at the start of the summer and the assessments at the end. These results reflect both the value of the expanded curriculum and the dedication of the teachers and staff involved.

As part of our efforts to motivate and inspire students, we invited Temesgen, a former sponsored student who graduated from Gondar University and now works at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, to speak with the group. Drawing on his own educational journey, he offered thoughtful and heartfelt advice, encouraging students to stay focused and resilient despite the challenges they face. His talk concluded with a lively Q&A session, during which students asked insightful questions and engaged deeply with his experiences.

Investing in Futures: Anteneh's Story

Anteneh joined our sponsorship programme as a child. Through dedicated support and his own remarkable efforts, he is now employed in the career of his choice and keen to pass on the benefit he received to other children in the country. He tells his sponsorship story below.

When I joined the sponsorship programme, my family faced significant financial problems. It was a constant struggle to make ends meet, and my education was a major source of worry for my parents. Now, I am 25 years old and working as a Process Chemist in the chemical industry.

The sponsorship supported me by covering all my education-related expenses. This was a huge burden lifted from my family. It meant I had everything I needed to focus on my studies, from textbooks and uniforms to school fees. This comprehensive support allowed me to learn without stress. If I hadn't been sponsored, the financial pressure on my family would have been too great. I likely would have had to leave school early. I would not have become a Process Chemist. Instead of building a career I am passionate about, I would probably be in a low-paying, unskilled job, struggling just as my family did before.

The most meaningful part of sponsorship for me was when my sponsor, Nadine, came to Ethiopia and I got to meet her family in person. I was so excited and happy. Putting faces to the names, shaking their hands, and being able to thank them directly was an unforgettable moment. It transformed the support from something abstract into a real, human connection. **It reinforced that someone across the world truly cared about my future.**

I would say that the biggest challenge facing children from low income households in Ethiopia today is the overwhelming financial barrier. Even with the will to learn, a child cannot go to school without the basics: a uniform, books, and supplies. This pressure often forces children to drop out and work to help their families. Beyond that, many children in rural areas lack access to quality schools and motivated teachers, creating a gap that is very hard to close without external support.

If I had a magic wand, I would erase the link between a family's wealth and a child's access to quality education. I would ensure that every child, no matter where they are born, has the same opportunity I was given – the opportunity to learn, to dream, and to build a life based on their potential, not their parents' income.

Sponsorship is more than a donation; it's an investment in a future. Look at me: I was a child with dreams but no means. Today, I am a chemist and I dream of helping other children in my country. Sponsorship creates a ripple effect. You are not just changing one life; you are empowering someone who will go on to uplift their community and their country.

"We were lucky to be able to meet Anteneh during one of our trips to Ethiopia. We visited his school and met his family. This was a very special day for all of us.

We are so pleased to have helped him to stay at school and go to university. We now sponsor two other students. Not all students go to university but each extra year at school is beneficial for them and improves their life chances."

— Nadine ◊ Anteneh's sponsor

School Construction

Together We Learn ensures access to education through the construction of school facilities that mean more children can stay in school. This year we continued strengthening school infrastructure, focussing on projects that expand access to safe, permanent classrooms and improve learning conditions for growing student populations.

A Bright Start: Transforming Early Learning at Kebele 20

New Kindergarten classrooms at Kebele 20 have transformed early learning for young children in Azezo. Baseline consultations showed deep concern about the old mud and wood classrooms, which were described as 'unsafe', 'dark' and 'uncomfortably hot'. Many children reported feeling anxious in the space and the poor environment was discouraging attendance. Our project replaced the old classrooms with a bright, concrete four classroom block, fully furnished and designed around children's needs. Enrolment for the new school year has doubled to 240 children, reflecting renewed confidence in the early education available at Kebele 20.

The new classrooms are spacious, well ventilated and equipped for play-based learning. Children, parents and teachers helped shape the design, choosing hexagonal desks for group work, open shelving for play resources and a fresh colour palette to make the rooms welcoming. A new outdoor playground was also installed after children and teachers highlighted the need for safe, high quality play equipment to support physical and social development.

Alongside the construction, training was provided for the four Kindergarten teachers, none of whom had previously specialised in early childhood education. Training focused on child development, active learning and the use of local materials for play based teaching. Training was supported by a field visit to a high performing government Kindergarten to see the methods in practice.

The project faced challenges, including delays caused by conflict related transport disruptions and the need to source additional furniture due to rising enrolment. Careful planning and strong local partnerships helped us manage these pressures while keeping the project on budget.

Enrolment increased by **100%**

240 children accessing quality early education

The Power of Partnership

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." So goes a well-known African proverb.

Collaboration is one of Together We Learn's core values; it ensures that we work with communities and existing structures so that our work is genuinely effective. This year, through strategic partnership with the Amhara Development Association (ADA), we have been able to build more facilities and benefit more children than we could achieve alone.

ADA is a local NGO that strengthens community capacity, mobilises resources, and ensures broad public participation in development efforts. Together We Learn worked with the ADA this year on construction projects at Kebele 20 and Gendit schools. Their financial contributions, volunteer mobilisation model, and localised offices enabled us to upgrade the classrooms at Kebele 20 to durable concrete structures, and to continue construction at at Gendit, our model rural primary school project in a conflict-affected area we could not otherwise have reached.

The impact of the partnership has been significant, advancing both our organisations' aims, delivering greater benefits for schools and communities, and ensuring your donations go further.

Hope despite conflict at Gendit School

Gendit Primary School in Maksegnit continues to take shape as a model rural primary school despite exceptionally difficult circumstances. Since conflict broke out in August 2023, almost all of the schools in the zone have closed. Gendit is one of only ten that has remained open, providing a vital service to children in the area. A new school director has brought strong leadership and renewed positive collaboration with the education office.

800
students benefitting from new classrooms at 3 schools

The original plan to build a single block was no longer feasible after four years of conflict related delays, rising construction costs and new government standards. The project was redesigned into two phases: a four classroom block built this year, with a separate library and office block planned for 2026. This responds to increased enrolment - now 376 students - and ensures the school can continue teaching up to Grade 8. The new classroom block is now complete and fully furnished providing four bright classrooms, while refurbished older buildings are being used as temporary office and staff space. Additional support for quality of education at the school this year included new curriculum reference books, a fenced kindergarten play area and teacher training delivered in Gondar, where staff could travel safely.

Teacher development has been an important part of the project. 80% of teachers reported they had mostly implemented the training, and all felt it had improved their teaching. A Teacher Competency Framework has helped teachers adopt clearer lesson planning, including writing lesson objectives on the blackboard, and teachers reported improvements in questioning techniques and student engagement.

Because conflict has made direct access unsafe, we have relied on strong partnerships to maintain oversight. Amhara Development Association (ADA) staff based in the area conducted weekly site visits, supported by regular communication with the director, local supervisors and government engineers. This collaboration has ensured construction quality and continuity despite the security situation.

Breaking ground again in Oromia

We have been unable to run construction projects in the Oromia region since 2020 due to the impact of conflict and COVID 19, so we were delighted to start work in May 2025 on a new concrete block that will provide four permanent classrooms for Kurkura Elementary School. The school sits on the outskirts of Bishoftu, where rapid population growth - driven by conflict related internal displacement and expanding industrial parks - has placed huge pressure on already limited education facilities.

Kurkura Elementary School was prioritised because it was teaching in corrugated iron or mud and wood classrooms that are loud in the rain, unbearably hot in the sun and unsuitable for afternoon lessons. There was huge demand from the local population but the school could only provide education up to Grade 4. At baseline, all teachers described the classrooms as totally inadequate, and every child surveyed said learning in them made them feel sad.

The project will replace these temporary structures with bright, spacious and durable classrooms, enabling the school to expand teaching up to Grade 6, the end of primary school and a critical exam year. From September, 320 children will benefit directly, with many more in the years ahead.

The first months of the project focussed on establishing strong foundations. A competitive bidding process selected a local contractor, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the school, and construction began immediately to complete the sub structure before the heavy rains. By August, excavation, masonry, beams, the floor slab, columns and hollow block walls were all complete, marking a strong start and keeping the project on schedule.

Photos: children attend lessons in the crowded, iron sheet classrooms (top); construction begins on the new classroom site (middle); the concrete framework of the new classrooms takes shape (bottom).

Quality of Education

Together We Learn improves the quality of education through teacher training and provision of quality educational resources.

Teacher Training

We support teachers in Ethiopia to deliver more engaging, inclusive, and effective lessons. In traditional, overcrowded classrooms, many children, and especially those with limited support or special needs, struggle. Our training builds teachers' capacity for impactful learning.

Helping Children Read, Write, and Thrive

Together We Learn's teacher training efforts focus on improving English teaching. Our early-grade English literacy intervention has been refined over time for maximum impact, centred on Grade 1 teachers and training in engaging phonics-based methodology.

English proficiency is essential for Ethiopian students to progress in education, as all subjects from secondary school onwards are taught in English. Without strong English literacy skills, students struggle to succeed beyond Grade 8, regardless of ability. The challenge is even greater for students from low-income households, families with illiterate parents, or those with reading difficulties. Evidence shows that structured pedagogy programmes can generate learning gains equivalent to three additional years of schooling for every $100 spent per child (Angrist et al., 2025).

14
local Ethiopian phonics trainers newly certified or upskilled

1,200
teachers trained from 1,015 schools, improving phonics skills by
80%
after the first training

69,500
students reached, improving literacy outcomes by
78%
on average

Phonics teaches English through letter sounds rather than the alphabet. It is now the standard approach in many English-speaking countries and is proven to be especially effective for students learning English as a second language. (2025 GEEAP - Effective Reading Instruction)

Through our partnership with Jolly Phonics, we train teachers in phonics and child-friendly teaching techniques, such as songs, actions, and stories, that make lessons more enjoyable and effective. These methods are still uncommon in Ethiopia. They mean that students are more engaged in lessons and make faster progress.

This year, **we trained 1,200 teachers, reaching 69,500 students and improving literacy outcomes by an average of 78 percentage points**. The project was delivered in collaboration with the Amhara and Oromia Education Bureaus, who endorsed the training and covered teacher attendance costs and provided training venues.

Training took place over five days: three days in the first semester and two refresher days in the second. Schools received teacher books, pupil books, and posters, with ongoing support from local education officers and online chat groups.

Delivery in Amhara was especially poignant this year. Conflict in the region placed travelling teachers at risk, yet attendance remained high. 93% of invited teachers chose to attend despite this risk.

"I have been teaching English for 13 years. In November, I had a good opportunity to get this training. It really made my English teaching method outstanding. I have full confidence now to teach English to my students in a fun and enjoyable manner.

The refresher training time is difficult because the road transportation is so risky. But all these challenges didn't stop me. I left my phone at home, wore older clothes not to be identified as a teacher, and came. I hope I will go back home safely with the help of God and will support my students happily and effectively."

— Ateref ◊ Grade one teacher, Amhara

The conflict also strained the Education Bureau's budget due to urgent security-related priorities. Nonetheless, they maintained their commitment and funded teacher attendance for the second semester so training could continue.

By the end of the year, students taught by teachers who attended our training outperformed control-group students by 78 percentage points in literacy tests, significantly improving their abilities in sounding letters, reading words, and writing words.

To strengthen sustainability, we also **trained 911 school directors and 126 government personnel**. Director sensitisation supports teachers with implementation, while training officials and lecturers enables continued monitoring and assistance at local levels. We also trained **eight new Ethiopian trainers** and upgraded six existing trainers, ensuring the local capacity needed to meet increasing demand for training.

Emebet's Story

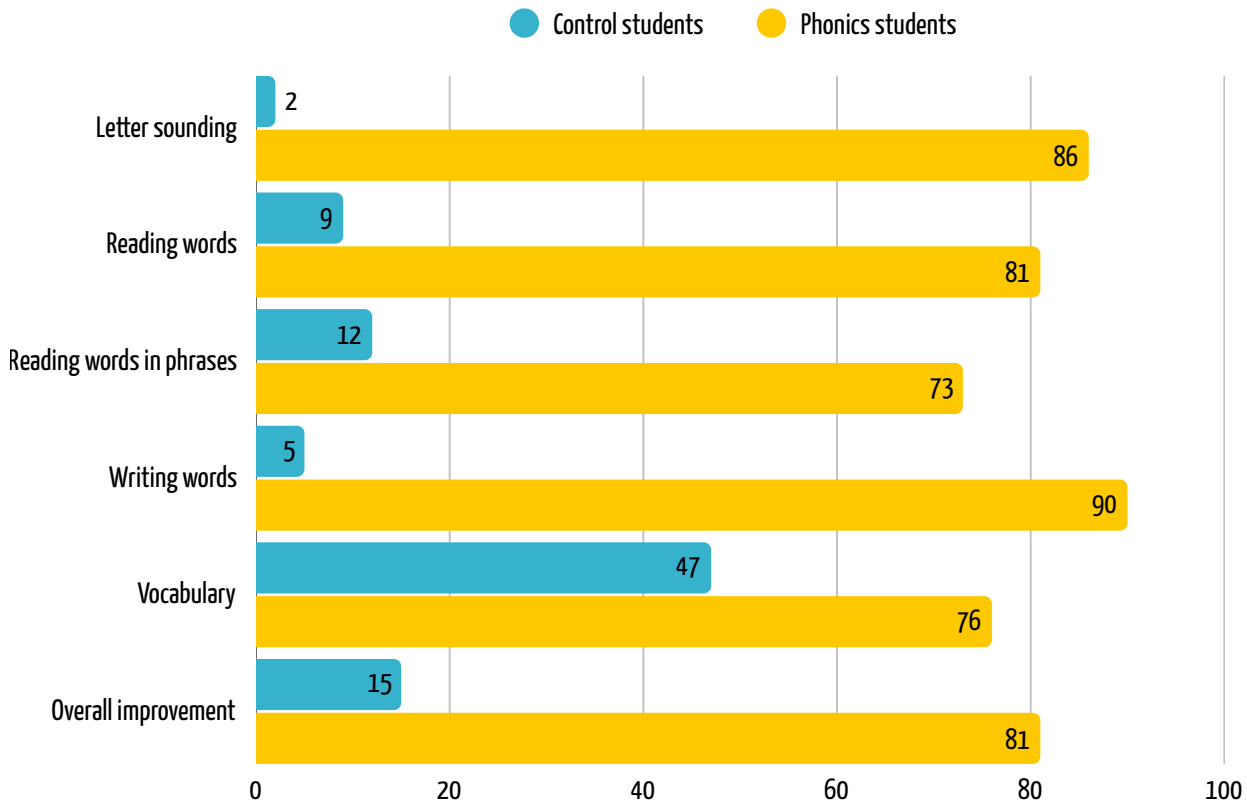
Emebet had been teaching grade one students for over 40 years before attending our teacher training. *"For years, I was teaching my students the names of the letters (A, B, C), but neither they nor I understood what we were doing. I would tell them to read, but they simply couldn't, and I didn't know how to teach them to decode words correctly. I just kept repeating the same method, thinking I was helping them. But in reality, I was wasting their time and mine. The children didn't enjoy English lessons, and they made little progress. Even I struggled with spelling correctly."*

She described the Jolly Phonics training as a revelation. *"Everything changed after that training. English became one of the most enjoyable and engaging subjects for my students. They began learning to read and write through playful activities, using sounds, actions, songs, and stories. The children were genuinely inspired to read and write new words, something I had never seen before."*

Not only did Emebet completely transform her approach to teaching grade one, but she started running tutorials for students in higher grades who had missed out on this method. She even took it upon herself to train other teachers voluntarily during her time off, determined to pass on the learning before she retired.

Improvement in Literacy Outcomes

Percentage point improvement in literacy skills tests from the beginning to the end of the year among students taught by teachers trained as part of our phonics project (phonics students) and students taught by teachers using the standard curriculum methodology (control students).



Advocating for Curriculum Change

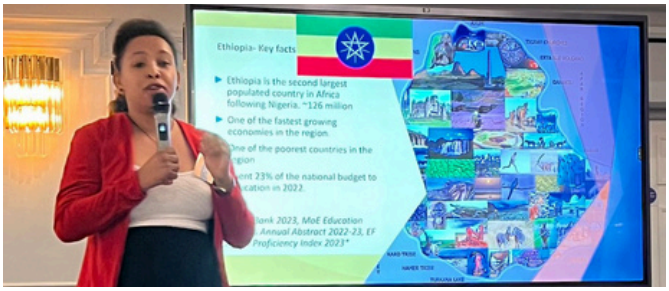
The most effective way to improve literacy outcomes for students in Ethiopia is to ensure that all children have access to better teaching methods through curriculum change. Alongside delivering training, Together We Learn is working to embed phonics methodology within state systems.

At the start of the year, our Country Director attended the first Pan-African Synthetic Phonics Summit in Cape Town. We hosted the Heads of the Amhara and Oromia Regional Education Bureaus at the conference. Giving them the opportunity to hear how phonics is being used to teach English in other African countries and to share the impact the methodology is already having on Ethiopian students through our project.

Later in the year, we were pleased to host the CEO of Teacher Development from the Ministry of Education at the international Jolly Phonics conference in the UK. The event opened constructive conversations with representatives from countries that have already integrated phonics into their curricula and reinforced a shared ambition to bring phonics into Ethiopia's English curriculum.

Our Country Director also took part in the African Union's workshop on Scalable Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Practices to End Learning Poverty in Addis Ababa. This led to an invitation from the Ministry of Education to attend the National Reading Network, which was established to promote early grade reading and improve literacy outcomes in primary schools. Together We Learn is now an active member of this network.

Invitation to participate in national literacy initiatives and growing interest in our project from both ministry and regional levels has been a significant success of the programme this year. Our engagement with these bodies continues to deepen, and recognition of our intervention is increasing. With sustained commitment to the programme, we are hopeful that this momentum will contribute to national adoption of the methodology and expand its impact to hundreds of thousands of children across Ethiopia.



Kindu Klub

Strengthening Learning Through Tutoring, Books and Digital Access

The Kindu Klub after-school service continued to be a vital source of stability, learning and nourishment for children from disadvantaged households in Gondar this year. Many of the children we support face overcrowded classrooms, short school days and limited support at home due to low parental literacy. The club provides a safe, structured environment where they can learn, play and grow with confidence.

Across the year, the Kindu Klub offered a wide range of support each week, including hot nutritious meals for 75 children, tutorials and homework help for 50 pupils and library access for 84 students. These activities help children build academic skills, creativity and emotional wellbeing, while giving families reassurance that their children are safe and supported.

Library and IT access remained central to the programme. We purchased 203 new study books in response to an evaluation, ensuring students have up to date materials aligned with the new curriculum, which is particularly important for those preparing for Grade 6, 8 and 12 exams. Our computer facilities were nearing the end of their life, so they have been replaced with new desktop PCs to ensure children can continue developing essential digital skills.

Children attending the club received both group and individual academic guidance, with extra homework and assignment support available throughout the week. Football sessions continued every Friday and were open to both girls and boys, helping children build teamwork, confidence and physical fitness. We were also pleased to run a creative summer programme in music, drawing and drama for children who presented at our annual family forum. Hot meals are provided twice daily for all students attending morning or afternoon sessions.

The year was not without challenges. The Klub has been affected by the daily realities of conflict in the region, rising inflation and intermittent water shortages. Despite this, staff worked tirelessly to keep services running, ensuring children continued to receive meals, learning support and a safe place to play.

50
students receiving homework support each week

203
new study books bought

84
students using the library each week

School Linking

This was a **year of reading** across our School Linking programme, with partner schools in Ethiopia, the UK and the US celebrating stories and promoting reading for pleasure through shared activities, letters and creative exchanges. Children explored one another's cultures through the books they read, the tales they told and the artwork they created, strengthening confidence, curiosity and global connection.

Our Shared Learning Activity focused on **traditional tales**, a theme chosen by Ethiopian teachers who wanted their students to engage with stories from their own oral heritage and share them with their link schools. Children read and retold the Amhara folktale Sinziro and His Brothers, created drawings inspired by the story, and received tales from their partner schools in return. These exchanges brought real excitement into classrooms; teachers told us how eagerly pupils waited for their packages and how proud they were to see their work valued by friends overseas.

Reading for pleasure was also promoted through our termly newsletters, which encouraged UK and US schools to explore Ethiopian stories, celebrate Genna (Ethiopian Christmas), and bring non Western narratives into English lessons. These resources supported teachers to diversify and decolonise their curriculum, helping pupils appreciate the richness of Ethiopian history, food, festivals and storytelling traditions.

24
schools engaged in our linking programme

We also saw powerful ripple effects from the programme. At Bottesford Infant School, Ofsted highlighted the link in their Outstanding report for *"ensur[ing] pupils make rich links between their lives and contrasting cultures."* During Elsa Kebede's visit to the UK, we met the student led link group at Bedford Academy *(photos left)*, which has been partnered with Edget Feleg Secondary and Preparatory School in Gondar for five years. What began as a virtual fundraising walk during the pandemic has grown into a thoughtful, reading rich partnership shaped by student initiative, shared artwork and collaborative projects. Hearing sixth formers reflect on how the link has broadened their worldview was a highlight of the year.

Another link school to receive a visit was Moseley Primary School in Coventry *(photos below)*, where Hannah Dillon, our link coordinator, led an assembly on Ethiopian culture and supported pupils as they completed their Shared Learning Activity on traditional tales. The visit brought the programme to life for the children, helping them understand the stories they were reading and the friendships they were building across continents.

Despite the challenges of conflict, inflation and occasional communication delays, the programme remained active and resilient. Teachers on all sides worked hard to keep exchanges flowing, ensuring that children continued to experience the excitement of receiving stories from abroad and the pride of sharing their own.

"[The Ethiopia school link] ensures pupils make rich links between their lives and contrasting cultures."

— Ofsted ◊ Report on 'Outstanding' Bottesford Infant School

Children's Wellbeing

Together We Learn enables children to flourish through after-school activities and programmes supporting their families at home.

Playgroup

Stability, Learning and Joy in the Early Years

Our Playgroup in Gondar continued to offer a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for pre-school children and their families. Many of the youngest children we support live in overcrowded homes with limited space for play, and parents often have little time or resources to provide early learning opportunities. Playgroup gives them a calm, well resourced space where they can explore, learn and grow through play.

Each week, children up to 6 years old received nutritious meals, structured early learning activities, and plenty of opportunities for social interaction. Staff focused on early language development, fine motor skills and confidence building through songs, stories, puzzles and imaginative play.

Parents are also welcome and benefit from the Playgroup activities. Staff shared practical advice on nutrition, hygiene and early childhood development, helping families support their children's learning at home, especially those with limited literacy.

For many families, the programme provides vital reassurance, knowing their children are cared for in a safe and loving environment.

A major challenge this year was the severe water shortage affecting Gondar, which meant that the Playgroup was unable to offer its usual bathing service for much of the year. Bathing has always been an important part of the programme, supporting children's hygiene, dignity and wellbeing, so its absence was felt by both staff and families. Despite this, the team worked hard to maintain routines, ensure children stayed clean and comfortable, and provide parents with guidance on hygiene during periods of limited water access.

25
children attended each week

Football Teams

The Girls' Football Team in Gondar continued to offer a safe, empowering space for adolescent girls to build confidence, challenge gender norms and develop leadership through sport. The team trained twice a week throughout the year, with an exceptional 96% attendance rate, and now supports **17 players**, many of whom have been involved for several years.

This year we strengthened the project with a new football coach, selected with the local Sports Office, who has helped the girls progress in technical skills and teamwork. A new Team Leader, a former sponsored student who recently graduated, also joined to support coordination and safeguarding, and has quickly become a trusted role model.

"Football makes me feel confident and helps me forget my worries after school. I want to keep improving so I can play professionally one day."

— Member of the Gondar girls' football team

At the weekly training sessions, the girls received nutritious meals with added protein, water and biweekly milk to support recovery and growth. New members received full kits, and all players were provided with reusable period packs and information sessions on menstrual health, ensuring they can participate confidently and comfortably.

Friendly matches with local teams were held during the summer break, giving the girls valuable experience and a chance to showcase their progress. A scout from a local youth team attended the final match of the season, opening up potential opportunities for talented players.

At the end of the year, a project evaluation showed clear enthusiasm and progress. Most players associated participation in the team with feelings of progress, stability and helping others.

Meanwhile, the boys' teams continue to train in Oromia, where **56 boys and young men** in the under-17s and under-21s teams train together and support positive peer development. A key ambition this year was to help develop players into professionals by strengthening engagement with player agents and creating more opportunities for players to gain visibility.

Significant steps were taken towards this goal when the team won the Bishoftu Summer Cup, becoming champions among the 16 participating teams. The team also took home awards for Best Player and Best Goalkeeper, and positive feedback from the players about the new coach was reinforced when he received the tournament's Best Coach award.

73
children involved in our football teams

Special Thanks

Organisations

- Baillie Gifford Foundation
- Barzilai Foundation
- Building Futures Ethiopia
- Children's Voices in Action
- Coles-Medlock Foundation
- Corvallis Sister Cities Association
- Days for Girls UK
- Educational Opportunity Foundation
- Elsie Kerr Trust
- Enable-Ed
- Ethiopiaid
- Eva Reckitt Foundation
- Guernsey Overseas Aid
- Hosking Charitable Trust
- Jolly Learning
- Meeting Industry, Meeting Needs
- Pears Foundation
- Small International Development Charity Network
- Studiosus Foundation
- The Chamber of Us
- The Sycamore Trust
- Trans World Educational Experiences (Twedex)
- The Tula Trust
- Tutu's Fund for the Future
- The TUUT Charitable Trust
- Wild Frontiers Foundation

Gifts In Kind

- Rosica Solunova: voluntary services to examine accounts
- Crankstart - paid internship scheme
- Days for Girls - reusable period packs
- Dropbox - storage solutions
- Finsbury Park Trust - discounted office space
- Queen Mary University - paid internship scheme
- Mailerlite - discounted mailing service
- Salesforce - database

Link Schools

- Adams Elementary School, Corvallis, USA
- Backwell School, Bristol
- Bedford Academy, Bedford
- Bottesford Infant School, Scunthorpe
- Franklin Elementary School, Corvallis, USA
- Holland House Infant School and Nursery, Sutton Coldfield
- Impington Village College, Cambridge
- Moseley Primary School, Coventry
- South Avenue Elementary, New York, USA
- St Nicolas and St Mary Church of England Primary School, Shoreham-by-Sea
- Stratton Primary School, Stratton
- Unicorn School, Richmond

Volunteers

- Ethiopia Abebe
- Eniye Bemir
- Mirana Claye
- Stefania Capraru
- Nadine Carle-Edgar
- Chloe Edapal
- Ashley England
- Elsabeth Gezahegn King
- Debebe Hailegabriel
- Eyitayo Makinde
- Raquel Martinez Ballester
- Holly McKenzie
- Mieraf Mergia
- Carola Pozzi Carmelini
- Eleanor Seaver
- Jack Sharville
- Matthew Stockdale

Fundraisers

Edinburgh Marathon
- Aicha Meknassi

Pottery Sales
- John Wright

Royal Parks Half Marathon
- Andrew Hunter
- Arron Zitver
- Charlie Moody
- Daniel Cashman
- Fraser Campbell
- Emily Pogue
- Fabio Pizzoccheri
- Gemma White
- Joey Pogue
- Lorenzo Foot
- Madelaine Clifford
- Sasha Hunter
- Tim Otty
- Tom Moody
- Tom Richards

Our Team

Ethiopia Team

Elsa Kebede
Country Director

Tatek Ezezew
Amhara General Manager

Binalfew Alemu
Amhara Accountant and Administrator

Project Teams

Dawit Megerssa
Oromia Projects Manager

Zemene Mersha
Amhara Projects Manager

Fikiraddis Tarekegn
Projects & Sponsorship Assistant

Wubetu Addisu
Kindu Klub Youth Worker

Chekula Gebre-Egzabhier
Playgroup Youth Worker

Sponsorship Teams

Marta Bekele
Sponsorship Manager

Aster Molla
Sponsorship Coordinator

Lensa Abera
Oromia Accountant & Coordinator

Asfaw Admas
Sponsorship Coordinator

Supporting Staff

Selamawit Abebe
Cashier and Purchaser

Askalech Astatkie
Cook

Melat Getu
Cook

Abebech Mequanent
Cleaner

Enanye Tadele
Cleaner and Messenger

Abate Taye
Guard

Tigabu Bera
Guard

Wagnew Shumeye
Guard *(retired Sep 2025)*

Abebe Dinku
Gardener

UK Team

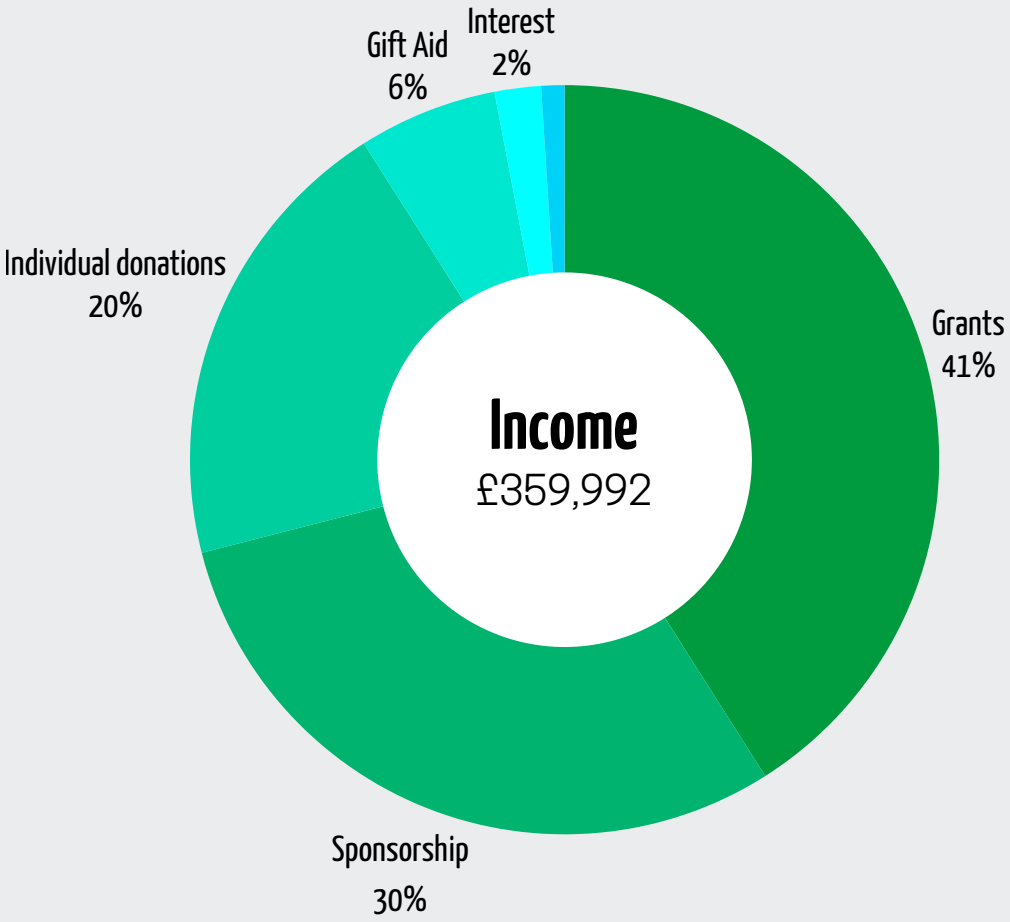
Caroline Walker
Chief Executive

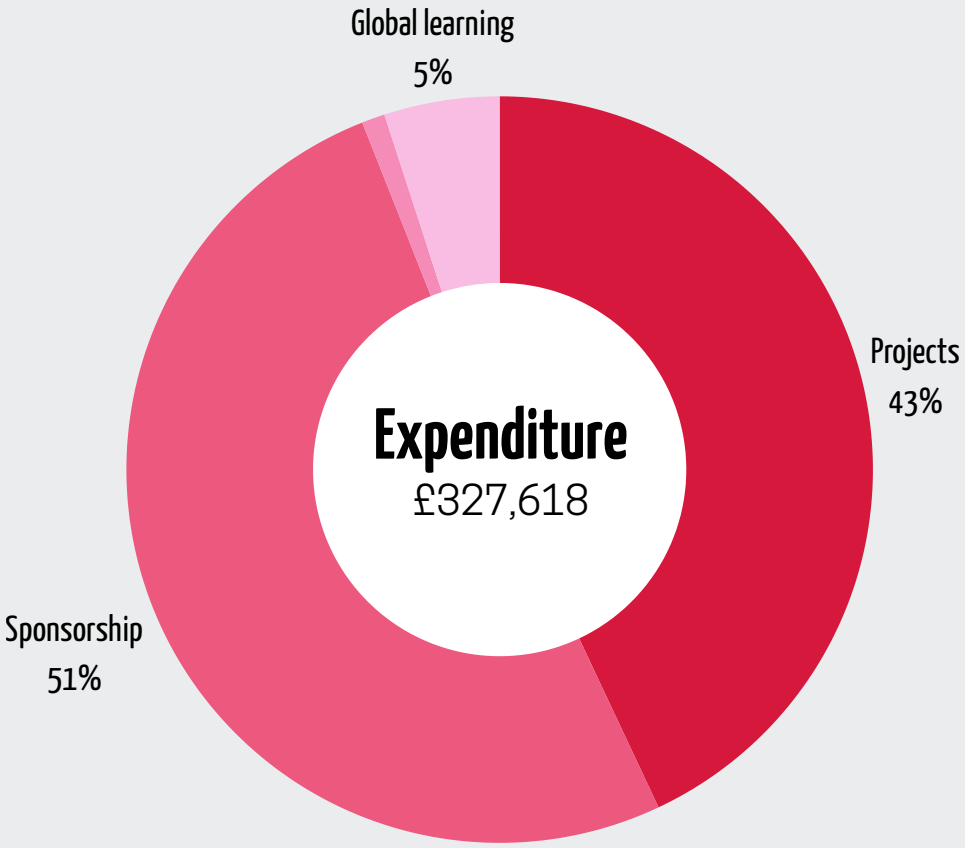
Gaby Sanwikarja
Sponsorship Coordinator

Hannah Dillon
Programme Manager

Our Finances

Income and Expenditure





Statement of Financial Activities

	Unrestricted funds (€)	Restricted income funds (€)	Total funds (€)	Prior year funds (€)
Incoming resources				
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	77,733	171,304	249,037	218,385
Charitable activities	2,935	108,020	110,955	125,025
Total	80,668	279,324	359,992	343,410
Resources expended				
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	18,237	-	18,237	18,035
Charitable activities	5,289	304,092	309,381	291,107
Total	23,526	304,092	327,618	309,142
Net income / (expenditure)	57,142	- 24,767	32,374	34,268
Transfer between funds	- 33,844	33,844	-	-
Foreign exchange (losses) / gains	212	-	212	- 284
Net movement in funds	23,511	9,076	32,587	33,984
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	259,710	115,576	375,286	341,302
Total funds carried forward	283,221	124,652	407,873	375,286

Balance Sheet

	Total this year (€)	Total last year (€)
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	-	-
Total fixed assets	-	-
Current assets		
Debtors	-	5,870
Cash at bank and in hand	487,457	370,111
Total current assets	487,457	375,981
Creditors: amounts failing due within one year	- 79,584	- 695
Net current assets / (liabilities)	407,873	375,286
Total assets less current liabilities	407,873	375,286
Funds of the charity		
Restricted income funds	124,652	115,576
Unrestricted funds	283,221	259,710
Total funds	407,873	375,286

Notes to the Accounts

Note 1 - Basis of preparation

The financial statements of the charitable trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)', and Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of investments. There were no related party transactions for the period.

Cash Flow

A cash flow statement has not been prepared as the Trustees have taken advantage of the exemptions afforded by Financial Reporting Standard Number 1 (revised) as the charity is of similar size to a small company.

Corporation Tax

The charity is exempt from taxation in respect of Income and Capital Gains under Section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 and Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Note 2 - Incoming Resources

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Together We Learn is formed of the merger of two charities Link Ethiopia & The Kindu Trust. Any legacy donations received by the previous charities are transferred to Together We Learn in accordance with the relevant Deeds of Transfer.

Note 3 - Analysis of income

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

	Unrestricted funds (€)	Restricted income funds (€)	Total funds (€)	Prior year funds (€)
Donations and legacies				
Donations and gifts	47,472	-	47,472	39,576
Projects	-	171,304	171,304	156,878
General grants provided	-	-	-	-
Git Aid	22,928	-	22,928	11,682
Interest	7,333	-	7,333	10,249
Total	77,733	171,304	249,037	218,385
Charitable activities				
Sponsorship	-	108,020	108,020	122,089
Global Learning	2,935	-	2,935	2,936
Total	2,935	108,020	110,955	125,025
Total Income	80,688	279,324	359,992	343,410

Note 4 - Resources Expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure includes VAT which is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates. Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them. Costs are split between categories based on staff time.

Note 5 - Raising funds

Raising Funds	Total funds (£)	Prior year funds (£)
Events	1,004	2,903
Merchandise & other	312	390
Shared operations	3,775	4,892
Staffing	13,145	9,850
Total	18,237	18,035

Note 6 - Employees

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the London office: 2 (2 in 2023-24). Number with annual remuneration of £60,000 or more: 0.

Employees	Total funds (£)	Prior year funds (£)
Wages & salaries	59,892	52,101
Social security costs	4,217	3,649
Pension Contributions	1,037	946
Total	65,146	56,696

Note 7 - Trustee Remuneration

Trustees received no remuneration nor expenses.

Note 8 - Tangible Fixed Assets

Purchases of under £1,000 in value are written off in the year of purchase.

Note 9 - Debtors & prepayments

Amounts falling due within one year:

Debtors	Total funds (£)	Prior year funds (£)
Trade debtors	-	5,870
Total	-	5,870

Note 10 - Creditors

Amounts falling due within one year:

Creditors	Total funds (£)	Prior year funds (£)
Accruals	-	-
Social security	872	695
Deferred income	78,712	-
Total	79,584	695

Note 11 - Movement in Funds

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

The charity maintains detailed restricted funds. There were 29 unexpended restricted funds at the year end.

Note 12 - Foreign Exchange Calculation

Transactions in Euros are translated at rates prevailing when funds are received or expended. Balances denominated in Euros are translated at the rate of exchange prevailing at the year end.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees.

Signatures

Full name
Holly McKenzie
Position
Chair
Date
28/04/2026

Full name
Jack Sharville
Position
Treasurer
Date
28/04/2026

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report on the accounts of Together We Learn for the year ended 31st August 2025, which are set out on pages 38 to 42.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.
It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements (i) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and (ii) to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Rosica Solunova FCCA

29 April 2026

Together We Learn
ETHIOPIA

Website

www.twlethiopia.org

Registered Address

225-229 Seven Sisters Road,
London, N4 2DA

Trustees

Nadine Carle-Edgar
Ashley England
Elsabeth Gezahegn King
Holly McKenzie
Jack Sharville
Matthew Stockdale

Chief Executive

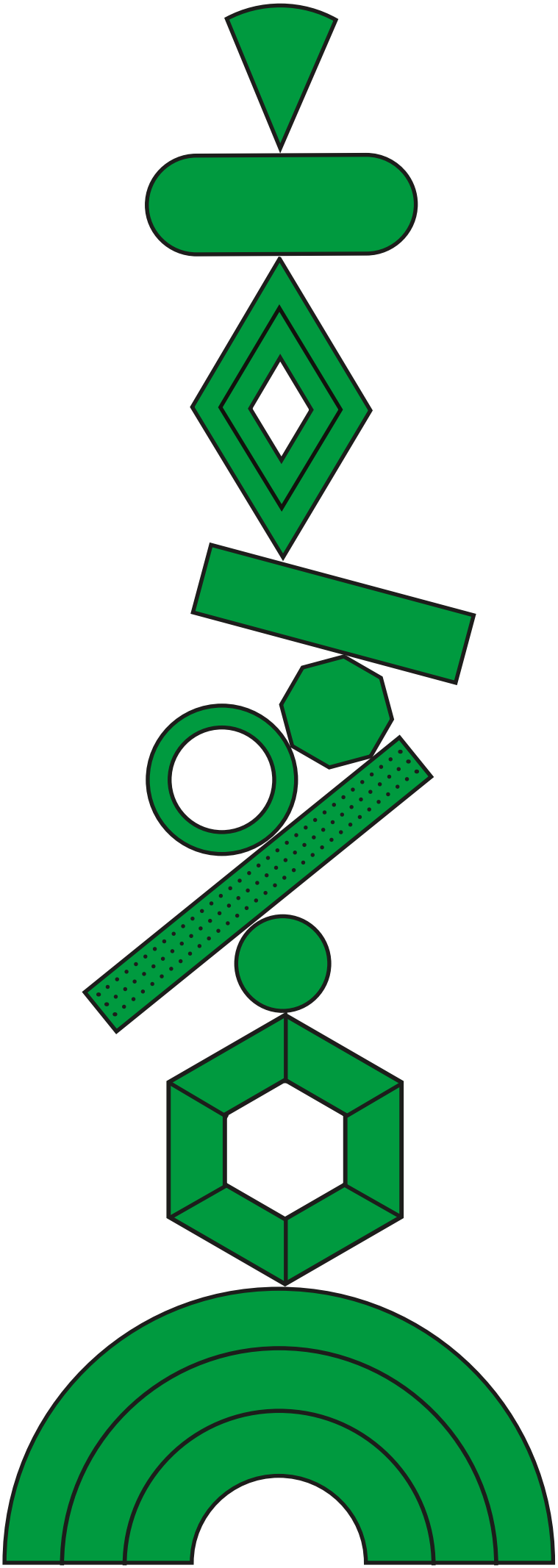
Caroline Walker

President

Helen Pankhurst CBE

Banker

The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.
P.O. Box 101, 1 Balloon Street
Manchester, M60 4EP

Registration

Registered charity number: 1165953
Charitable Incorporated Organisation,
Constitution last amended 8 May 2020