



**LINK**  
EDUCATION

# Tesfanesh's Story

## From high school drop-out to university student

Tesfanesh grew up in a rural area of Ethiopia where girls' education is not usually encouraged.

She has two sisters and two brothers. Unfortunately, her father passed away when she was just one year old. Their mother had to work tirelessly to support them and while growing up, they all faced economic hardship.

Due to the financial barriers, compounded by the fact that her mother had to move to another city for work, she was forced to drop out of school at Grade 5. During her mother's absence, Tesfanesh's uncle took care of her, but she had to do all the domestic chores, leaving her with no chance to attend school.



This situation deeply saddened Tesfanesh, especially when she saw her friends going to school while she was left behind, causing her psychological distress.

After a year, her mother returned and then Tesfanesh resumed her studies.

Due to her financial problems, Tesfanesh was supported by the STAGES project and received support including scholastic items and sanitary pads. This enhanced her self-esteem and self-confidence, which positively influenced her learning performance. She started receiving tutorial support at Grade 7 which was a critical step to unlock her hidden talent and significantly improve her academic progress.

**“I am convinced that this project is a true blessing, not only for me but also for thousands of female students.”**



When Tesfanesh reached Grade 9 and transited to secondary school, her main worry was how she would afford educational materials. The STAGES project included provision of bursary which allowed Tesfanesh to continue her learning.

Tesfanesh says, “The head teachers of our school always helped us get special counselling and support for female students, which is unusual in many schools. After I understood it, I realised that it was the result of the training that the project had provided them. Teachers also give special support to female students. They helped and supported us to participate in class, to focus on our studies, and to ask questions that we did not understand. This helped me not only to become stronger in my studies but also helped me to believe in myself. These and other support from the project made me have more self-confidence and change society’s view that men are better than women”.

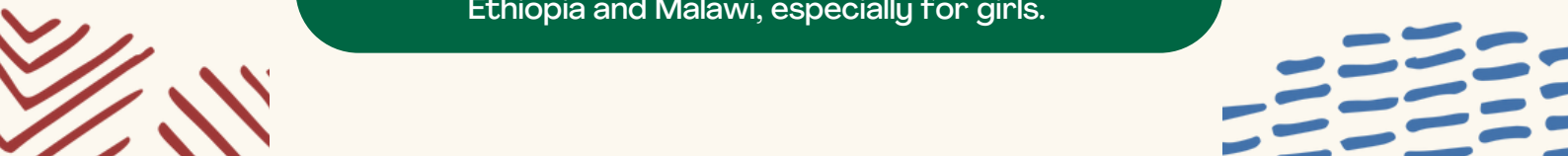
Tesfanesh and her mother received an annual learning performance award. These awards recognise girls and their mothers who have shown outstanding performances in the course of the academic year. This encouraged other mothers in her area to teach and encourage their daughters, affecting the community at large.

“This project made me believe I’m equal to men,” says Tesfanesh.

“It made me think and believe that I could do anything. It showed me that no matter what problems I faced, I could overcome them. The project helped me to get good results in my studies and made me believe in myself. As a result, when I was a student in secondary school, I received encouraging awards every time. Currently I am studying medicine here at Wolaita Sodo University and I am at my second year.

The project holds significance not only for me but for all women.”

Read more about the [STAGES Project](#)



Link Education removes barriers to education across Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi, especially for girls.