**Marginalised girls belong at school**

**Education is a key to development, economic growth and improved quality of life. Education is a fundamental human right that every human being should access without discrimination or the threat of violence. In Ethiopia, girls' education can be limited. Girls are often unable to attend school for financial, economic and cultural reasons. Girls with disabilities are vulnerable to discrimination, making them one of the most marginalised groups in the community.**

Mimi is a young girl lives in Gedio Zone in Beloya Kebele. She is the youngest child in her family. She was unable to attend school because of her disability. After she was born, she became paralysed and is unable to walk. She spent her firt 15 years in her home while her friends were playing and attending school. Her family keep her at home because of cultural beliefs in their rural community. To protect Mimi from discrimination, they choose to keep her at home.

In rural areas, people with disabilities tend to face more challenges than their counterparts in urban areas. They are less likely to attend school, be employed or get better health services.

**Mimi's disability doesn't keep her from dreaming of her future**

*"I was always curious about the outside world. The only friends I had were my family. My peers didn't want me to be their friend. Yet, all these things hadn't kept me from dreaming about school. I daydreamed about going to school and becoming a successful, educated businesswoman. However, the problem was I can't walk a single step and I need a crutch." Mimi says.*

Her father, Mulugeta, says*: "I was not lucky to see and applaud my child's first step. I carried her for nine years, looking for a good treatment, but I could only afford the traditional healing treatments. After many attempts, we just gave up and were forced to keep her in the house."*The CHANGE project, led by People in Need (PIN), works to bring vulnerable girls back to school. Mimi was one of the girls supported by the project. The CHANGE project arranged for a qualified teacher to teach and provide psychological support for girls with the same condition as Mimi. Community Action Groups also worked to alter the community's attitude toward girls' education, including towards those who live with a disability.

**Thanks to the equipment, girls can be independent**

In order to be able to bring those marginalised girls back to school, PIN, in collaboration with CIAI Ethiopia, donated eyeglasses, crutches and orthopaedic shoes for girls with disabilities. Girls with hearing impairments, elephantiasis and epilepsy received medical treatment in local hospitals.

Mimi continued: "*Now, I have received a crutch and solar lamps from the CHANGE project. So, in the coming year, I'll join the level one alternative basic education programme. I'm so excited to make friends and attend my education in the classroom like any other girl."*

Mulugeta is happy for his daughter, saying: *"Now my child can walk by herself. She doesn't need my support. Moreover, the community has started accepting her."*

**CHANGE Project**

The Improving Access to Education in Ethiopia for the most Marginalised Girls project was implemented by People in Need in collaboration with Alliance2015 member NGOs (Concern Worldwide, Welthungerhilfe, HELVETAS), CIAI, and other local partners.

The project has been implemented with the three major objectives:

* Improving learning outcomes and life skills for highly marginalised girls
* Increased transition rates for highly marginalised girls at key points in their pathway
* Improved community and government support, acceptance, and commitment to sustain girls' education.

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Link for photos: <https://peopleinneed.canto.global/b/N18EP>