

- ☀ **January 7**  
Ethiopian Christmas
- ☀ **January 19**  
Timkat (Epiphany)
- ☀ **March 2**  
Commemoration of the Battle of Adwa
- ☀ **March/April\***  
Good Friday and Easter
- ☀ **May 1**  
International Labor Day
- ☀ **September 11**  
Ethiopian New Year's Day
- ☀ **September 27**  
Meskel (finding of the cross)

\*date varies

## Religion in Ethiopia

Slightly more than 60 percent of Ethiopians are practicing Christians (43 percent Ethiopian Orthodox and 19 percent Protestant). Thirty-four percent of the population are Muslim, and 2.6 percent hold traditional beliefs.

**Christians** are followers of Jesus, a carpenter and a Jew from the city of Nazareth in present-day Israel. Christians believe that Jesus is the only son of God, born of a virgin woman (Mary) in a stable in Bethlehem. His story is told in the New Testament of the Christian holy book, the Bible. The Christian symbol—the cross—reminds the faithful that Jesus died for them, for the

forgiveness of their sins. Christian holidays include Christmas (December 25), which celebrates the birth of Jesus; Good Friday (March/April), which commemorates the death of Jesus on the cross; and Easter (March/April), the most holy of Christian sacred days, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus on the third day after his death.

Muslims are followers of **Islam**. Islam is an Arabic word meaning “submission to the will of Allah (God).” Muslims believe that Allah’s will was revealed to the prophet Muhammad more than 14 centuries ago and was captured in the Islamic holy book, the Koran (Qur’an). Together with the Sunnah, a collection of sayings attributed to Muhammad, these texts provide a firm basis for religious and social life for all Muslims, including rules for diet, dress, hygiene, and more. Islam is a religion of peace and prayerfulness. A devout Muslim prays five times daily. If possible, Muslims pray in a mosque, and on Friday do so with common prayer and a sermon. Islam also requires that Muslims make a pilgrimage, called the Hajj, to the holy city of Mecca at least once in their lifetime. Islamic holidays include Ramadan, the holiest month of the Muslim calendar, which commemorates the month in which Muhammad received the revelations that became the Koran. Eid al-Fitr is a joyous feast celebrating the end of Ramadan and the month of fasting. Al-Hijra celebrates the Islamic New Year.

*Additional sources include the CIA World Factbook and State Department websites.*



# ETHIOPIA

<b>Population</b>	91.7 million
<b>Capital City</b>	Addis Ababa
<b>Official Language</b>	Amharic
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	US\$410/year
<b>Youth Literacy Rate</b>	63% male/47% female
<b>Access to Safe Water</b>	97% urban/39% rural
<b>Under 5 Mortality Rate</b>	68/1,000 live births

*Source: The State of the World's Children 2014 (UNICEF)*

**Ethiopia** is located in northeast Africa within the area generally known as the Horn of Africa. It is landlocked and bounded by Sudan and South Sudan in the west, Kenya in the south, Somalia in the southeast, Djibouti in the east, and Eritrea in the north. The major topographical features are a massive highland complex of mountains and plateaus divided by the deep Great Rift Valley and a series of lowlands along the borders. Although Ethiopia lies near the equator, the country on the whole is far from tropical. The elevated nature of its highlands gives it a cooler climate than its geographical location would suggest. Ethiopians divide their country topographically into three major zones: *dega* (the cool highlands), *weyna dega* (the intermediate zone where most of the settled population lives), and *qolla* (the hot valleys and plains reaching their hottest and lowest levels in the desert conditions that prevail in the northeastern end of the Great Rift Valley).

Plan International USA is part of a global organization that works side by side with communities in 50 developing countries to end the cycle of poverty for children. We develop solutions community by community to ensure long-term sustainability. Our level of community engagement, long-term outlook, and constant focus on the needs and priorities of children is unique among international development organizations. Our solutions are designed up-front to be owned by the community for generations to come, and range from clean water and health-care programs to education projects and child-protection initiatives.



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## A Brief History

According to legend, the earliest recorded history of Ethiopia was the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon of Israel around the 10th century BC. Upon her return, she gave birth to Menilik, who became the first king of the Solomonic dynasty. Throughout most of the nation's history, conflict arose between Muslim and Christian factions struggling to convert all to their respective belief systems.

The coronation of Emperor Tewodoros in 1855 marked the beginning of modern Ethiopia. Christianity held strong as the nation defended itself against Sudanese invaders. By the end of the 19th century, Menilik II introduced the country to Western civilization with features such as the railroad, the telegraph and telephone, printing press, postal system, and schools and hospitals. After the military regime of Mengistu Hailemariam was overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was formed, led by Meles Zenawi. The new government recognized Eritrea's independence, ending a 30-year conflict between the two areas. In 1994, elections were held and Ethiopia's fourth Constitution was written.

## Plan's work in Ethiopia covers the following areas:

- ☀ Child survival and development
- ☀ Quality education
- ☀ Food security and nutrition
- ☀ Child participation and protection
- ☀ HIV and AIDS

## Child survival and development

We work to improve the health of communities by implementing programs to tackle childhood illnesses and improve safe motherhood services. Water, sanitation, and hygiene are core parts of our work, given that more than 250,000 children die every year

in Ethiopia due to unsafe water. We carry out projects to build water supply systems, train communities in sanitation and hygiene education, and support the construction of latrines. We also work to strengthen community-based organizations, government institutions, and local non-government organizations so that they can participate effectively in health development issues.

## Quality education

This program aims to ensure that all children access and receive quality education. Plan's work ranges from supporting early childhood care and development to teacher training and adult literacy initiatives.

## Food security and nutrition

This program works to improve the economic security of households so that they can become more resilient to shocks—such as the loss of a job, death of a family member, or a natural disaster—and are able to better plan for the future. We work to diversify agricultural production for household food consumption, improve employment opportunities by providing training in marketable skills, and help families to save for the future through our partners' saving and credit associations. We also promote nutrition in communities and provide supplementary feeding to children and food aid to the general population affected by drought and famine.

## Child participation and protection

From awareness-raising and lobbying on child rights to tackling harmful traditional practices and trafficking, child protection is central to all of our work. Our activities include training relevant government offices and law enforcement officers, and strengthening child-rights institutions such as legal protection centers and children's clubs. Children have the right to be protected and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. We work to ensure that children, their families,



and communities are involved in all aspects of their development, helping to identify major challenges and implement long-term solutions.

## HIV and AIDS

Plan helps communities affected by HIV and AIDS by increasing access to prevention, care, and support services for orphans, vulnerable children, and people living with HIV and AIDS. We also work to improve access to services focusing on prevention of parent-to-child transmission, as well as voluntary counseling and testing.

## Economic Security

The Ethiopian economy depends on agricultural production, which accounts for 46 percent of the country's GDP. About 80 percent of the population earns a living through agriculture, especially in producing the country's most important crop, coffee. Other crops, which include maize, sorghum, wheat, and barley, are almost entirely rain-fed. Several systems of farming exist, including seed-farming and shifting cultivation. Continued land degradation caused by loss of fertile land through soil erosion and recurrent drought contribute to the constraints of agricultural development.

## Language

Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia. It is very likely that you will encounter a language barrier in communicating with your sponsored child, as the majority of the children do not know enough English to write a letter. Those who do not know English will be assigned community workers or volunteers who will explain your letters and help the children compose their responses.

**Here are a few phrases in Amharic that you might want to use in your correspondence with your sponsored child:**

☀ **Tena yestelegn?**  
How are you?

☀ **Betteseb dehna new wey?**  
How is the family?

☀ **Egna dehna nen**  
We are well

☀ **Dehna hunu**  
Goodbye

## Holidays

Ethiopians observe a large number of national holidays. Holidays are very important to your sponsored child and family. The most important ones have religious or political significance: