**Written Contribution**

**Impact of Climate Change on Achieving Equal Enjoyment of Right to Education for Every Girl**

**Contribution Submitted to High Commissioner - Elizka Relief Foundation**

**Introduction**

Over the years, it has become widely recognized that Africa is the continent least responsible for deepening the climate crisis, despite being the continent most severely impacted by it. Among the groups that bear the brunt of the climate crisis in Africa, women and girls stand out as particularly vulnerable. The climate crisis has created a fertile environment for various problems and vulnerabilities, which have hindered access to education for school-age girls. This underscores the need to study the negative impact of the climate crisis from a gender perspective, revealing the challenges faced by girls' education in Africa. Efforts must be made to address these issues.

In this context, Elizka presents this contribution aiming to inform the High Commissioner on how climate change affects the right to education for girls in Africa, with a specific focus on Somalia and Ethiopia. set of recommendations were made to discuss ways to address outcomes of the negative effects of the crisis on girls' education in the two countries.

**Climate Crisis Directly Obstructs Girls’ Education in Africa:**

The countries of Ethiopia and Somalia are considered among the African nations most affected by the climate crisis in recent years. The negative effects of this crisis have broadened, creating multi-dimensional problems and disproportionately impacting women, one of the most vulnerable groups in African societies. In Somalia and Ethiopia, climate crisis has hindered access to education for girls in the most affected areas. This is due to the emergence of precarious conditions where female students face various forms of discrimination and challenges, reflecting the worsening climate crisis. Crisis negative impact on girls’ education within the countries of Ethiopia and Somalia can be reviewed as follows:

**First: Somalia**

Somalia has been experiencing extreme drought conditions for several years, leading to a lack of rainwater and increased humanitarian needs. This has had a devastating impact on children's education, especially for girls who are the direct victims of the climate crisis in Somalia. In addition to drought, the region has also faced floods and heavy rains, resulting in disasters for local communities in some parts of Somalia during 2022 and 2023 and further exacerbating the negative effects of the crisis. These circumstances have put immense pressure on school-age girls, hindering their education in various ways.

1. **Climate Displacement as Obstacle to Girls’ Education**

One significant challenge for female Somali students is climate-induced displacement, which disrupts their educational opportunities. The climate crisis has caused a reduction in pasture areas that Somali families rely on for agriculture and livestock feeding. As a result, families are forced to leave their homes and become displaced, following areas with available green pastures to sustain their livestock and livelihoods. **Statistics from 2023 indicate that approximately 300,000 Somali children have lost their educational opportunities** due to displacement of their families.[[1]](#footnote-1) Girls, in particular, are forced to stay outside the realm of education as a direct consequence of ongoing displacement. This situation significantly impacts the element of "**accessibility**," as girls face decreased opportunities to reach educational facilities amidst family displacement.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Furthermore, **girls in displacement communities bear significant responsibilities**. They are compelled to work in various sectors such as agriculture, construction, hospitality, and the collection of charcoal and firewood to provide financial support for their families. These responsibilities create a substantial gap between female students and their educational path.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. **Economic Crisis as Obstacle to Girls’ Education**

Many local communities in Somalia have experienced climate shocks, primarily in the form of drought, which has resulted in economic crises. These crises have reduced parents' ability to pay for schools, pushing families to seek ways to alleviate the economic burden.[[4]](#footnote-4) Consequently, **rates of early marriage for girls have increased by 3% between October 2021 and March 2022**. Early marriage forcibly transitions girls from childhood to adulthood and family responsibilities, eliminating their opportunities to complete their education.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. **Negative Effects of Climate Crisis on Educational Facilities**

The negative effects of the climate crisis in Somalia extend to educational facilities, significantly impeding girls' **access** to schools and the **quality** of education they receive. This is evident in the damage caused by heavy rains and floods to schools in southwestern Somalia. In April 2023, intense rains in the Gedo region led to the **destruction of four schools and the disruption of educational services for over 3,000 students**.[[6]](#footnote-6) Furthermore, heavy rains and floods in Al-Bardi, Hodor, and Baidoa in December 2023 caused significant damage to schools and educational materials, resulting in **temporary closures lasting two weeks**.[[7]](#footnote-7)

1. **Housework and Family Responsibilities as Obstacle to Girls’ Education**

Another severe consequence of the climate crisis is the increased responsibilities placed on school-age girls. The drought crisis, lack of water and food, and the shrinking of pastoral areas exacerbate the challenges faced by Somali students. Girls are forced to divide their time between **domestic work and searching for necessities near or far from their homes**. This inevitably leads to their absence from school, as they miss educational lessons to fulfill the water and food needs of their families and livestock.[[8]](#footnote-8) These trips to provide water for the family have become a major part of their routine activities. They not only hinder their ability to complete their education but also expose them to gender-based violence and various forms of sexual assault.[[9]](#footnote-9)

According to **statistics from 2022, the ongoing major drought crisis has had a severe impact on education in Somalia. Only 25% of Somali girls of primary school age are enrolled in education, and a staggering 65% of girls between the ages of 20 and 24 have not enrolled or have only reached primary education levels**. This can often be attributed to families prioritizing boys' education over girls', leaving girls to bear the brunt of the food shortage crisis alone.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Second: Ethiopia**

Ethiopia, on the other hand, is considered one of the African countries most affected by the climate crisis. **In December 2022, statistics revealed that up to 3.7 million Ethiopian children were unable to enroll in school or had been out of the education system for years** due to a combination of the climate crisis, prolonged drought, and ongoing conflicts. Unfortunately, these factors have hindered girls' equal right to education within Ethiopian society over the years.

1. **Consequences of Economic-Climatic Crisis as Obstacle to Girls’ Education**

The Somali region in eastern Ethiopia is particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of the climate crisis. Climate change has exacerbated problems such as drought, food shortages, crop destruction, and livestock deaths, leading to a severe economic crisis that places immense pressure on Ethiopian families. As a result, **early marriage of school-age girls has become a harsh reality, as families seek to alleviate the burden of supporting their daughters** amidst the worsening economic crisis. The **rate of child marriage among school-age girls increased by 119% in 2022**,[[11]](#footnote-11) and UNICEF estimates indicate that the child marriage rate will double within a year due to the climate crisis. Consequently, the **number of children at risk of dropping out of education tripled within three months from** June to October 2022.[[12]](#footnote-12) The marriage of girls signifies the end of childhood and the unfortunate loss of their opportunities to pursue education.

1. **consequences of Climate Crisis on Educational Facilities**

The climate crisis in Ethiopia also impacts educational facilities, directly affecting girls' **access** to schools and the **quality** of education they receive. This is evident through the impact of violent climate phenomena on school infrastructure. For instance, heavy rains in July and August 2022 resulted in sudden floods in the Osh River in the Ethiopian Afar region, **damaging 59 schools across ten different provinces**. Additionally, floods and landslides in the Amhara region caused significant damage to infrastructure, leading to the **destruction of 51 schools**. These events have increased displacement rates in affected areas, hindering girls' ability to access schools and exercise their right to education due to the adverse effects of the climate crisis.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Reports from 2024 reveal the extremely negative impact of floods on education in Somali region of Ethiopia, as floods caused the closure of schools and disrupted education services in the region **for two months during the last quarter of 2023**, and floods that struck the Somali region negatively **affected 227 schools, and an educational facility in 4 different regions within the region**, which caused the **closure of 139 schools while causing partial damage to 88 schools, which hindered the education of 67 thousand children** residing in the region,[[14]](#footnote-14) and consequently hindered the ability of school-age girls to complete their academic paths in light of the damage to educational facilities.

**Recommendations**

Within the framework of what was revealed about the reality of the climate crisis and its negative effects that hinder girls’ enjoyment of the right to education within the framework of equality in the countries of the African continent, especially Somalia and Ethiopia, and based on monitoring and the seriousness of impacts suffered by girls due to climate crisis, Elizka Relief Foundation presents Its special recommendations on ways to address effects of climate crisis on education of girls in Africa in the following points:

* Elizka calls on High Commissioner to cooperate with the governments of Somalia and Ethiopia to work on **launching an international initiative aimed at attracting more funding to support plans to respond to climate risks in Africa**, with the need to allocate a funding item to strengthen educational sector and develop educational facilities negatively affected by climate crisis.
* We encourage the governments of the African continent, especially Ethiopia and Somalia, to accelerate work on **disseminating early warning mechanisms for climate disasters** in local communities, to contribute to the early protection of educational facilities from destruction.
* Elizka calls on the High Commissioner to provide international technical and advisory support to Ministries of Education in Somalia and Ethiopia **to come up with a road map on ways to accommodate male and female students displaced by the climate crisis in the educational path**, including the establishment of community schools that accommodate school-age students in displacement communities.
* Elizka calls on the governments of Somalia and Ethiopia to work on **launching a development program aimed at modernizing the two countries’ development and human rights policies in a manner that takes into account gender perspective** and gender issues and problems caused by climate crisis.

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3. How drought is preventing children from going to school, Norwegian refugee council, <https://bitly.ws/JGpG> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Four Ways that Climate Change Impacts Girls’ Education in Africa, Global center on adaptation,** [**https://bitly.ws/3d2sM**](https://bitly.ws/3d2sM) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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6. At least 21 killed by flash floods in Somalia: UN, Ahram online, <https://bitly.ws/3ecTB> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Flooding has disrupted the education of millions of children in south-west Somalia, Relief web, <https://bitly.ws/3ecRu> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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9. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adolescent Girls’ Education in Somalia (AGES), Relief web, <https://bitly.ws/3d5qA> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ethiopian drought and child marriage – in portraits, The Guardian, <https://bitly.ws/3d6DW> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Child marriage on the rise in Horn of Africa as drought crisis intensifies, UNDP, <https://bitly.ws/3ecnM> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ethiopia: Floods - Jul 2022, Relief web, <https://bitly.ws/3eczd> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Over 67,000 children out of school in Ethiopia's Somali region due to floods: UN, Xinhua.net, <https://bitly.ws/3ecDR> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)