



Ethiopia Reads UK

Trustees' Annual Report

Period from 1 January 2025 to

Period end 31 December 2025

Charity contact information

Your charity's name: Ethiopia Reads UK

Scottish Charity Number: SC051397

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Charity trustees

Name all of your charity trustees for the period, and the date they left if they were not in post for the whole year:

1. Malcolm Alexander Clark
2. Ian Henderson McAteer
3. Charles Middleton
4. Helen Sylvia Papworth (appointed on 1 October 2025)



Objectives and activities

The charity was established in November 2021 with the objective of promoting the advancement of education in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on improving literacy and reading for children and young people.

Ethiopia has the second largest population in Africa, with a very young demographic: over half of its population of approximately 120 million is under the age of 18. Although the primary school system has expanded significantly and is now one of the largest in the world, literacy outcomes remain extremely poor. Around 65% of children are unable to read a single word, and only an estimated 5-6% read at their expected school year level. A major contributing factor is the severe shortage of age-appropriate reading materials in mother-tongue languages, alongside limited access to libraries and a weak culture of reading beyond the classroom.

Ethiopia Reads UK exists to mobilise support, resources, and awareness within the UK to help address these challenges. The charity supports initiatives that promote reading for pleasure and learning as a foundation for children's educational success, working in close collaboration with Ethiopia Reads, a long-established US-based non-profit organisation with over 20 years' experience operating in Ethiopia.

During the year, Ethiopia Reads UK formally launched its activities in the UK. Trustees and supporters held meetings with a range of interested individuals and organisations to raise the charity's profile, explain its mission, and explore potential partnerships and funding opportunities.

The trustees also held discussions with Ethiopia Reads personnel in Ethiopia to explore priority project options that Ethiopia Reads UK might support in future. One area identified as having particular potential impact is the development of a comic magazine for children in Ethiopia as a medium to stimulate children's interest in reading, especially among early and reluctant readers.

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document

The charity's governing document is a written constitution based on the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations model Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Trustee recruitment and appointment

The trustees serve on a voluntary basis. During the year, Helen Papworth was appointed as a trustee, strengthening the board's expertise in education, children's literature, and Ethiopian publishing.

Helen is from Wales. She began her career in education in the UK before moving to Ethiopia in 2004 as a volunteer advisor with the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa. She spent the following two years there working on the continuous professional development of teachers.

In 2008, Helen returned to Addis Ababa to support the Ministry of Education in developing civics textbooks and to undertake research for her doctoral thesis, *A Brief History of Ethiopian Illustrated Children's Storybooks*, completed in 2012. This thesis is a rare and significant resource for researchers and was an important reference in the bibliography of Ethiopian children's books published by Ethiopia Reads in the previous year.

Helen's interest in children's storybooks is both academic and practical. She is a talented and experienced illustrator who has produced illustrations for children's storybooks and teaching aids for many years. She was part of the pioneering group of Ethiopian children's writers and illustrators, alongside figures such as Alula Pankhurst and Daniel Michael Ambatchew, and remains an active illustrator, most recently working with Midako Books.

The trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to Helen for her more than 21 years of contribution to children's education in Ethiopia.

Achievements and performance

During the accounting period, Ethiopia Reads UK focused on establishing itself operationally in the UK, raising awareness of its mission, and further developing close working relationships with Ethiopia Reads and potential supporters.

By the year end, the charity held in excess of £5,000 in its bank account, of which over £4,000 was received as a single donation from another education-focused charity. No grants were made during the year, as trustees agreed to prioritise careful project identification and planning before committing funds.



Partner organisation highlights | Ethiopia Reads

During the year, Ethiopia Reads achieved a number of significant milestones, which Ethiopia Reads UK supports and promotes.

Ethiopia Reads in 2025 | At a glance

- Expanded literacy and reading service for over 11,500 children across urban, peri-urban and rural communities in Ethiopia, through strengthened community-based literacy models including reading centres and mobile libraries (donkey- and horse-powered).
- 27,300 children addressed in 78 schools in Tigray region supported through conflict-recovery literacy programming with 9,360 bilingual storybooks distributed.

- A total of 14,455 locally purchased, reprinted and imported children's books were distributed to 65 schools, libraries and institutions nationwide, benefiting an estimated 129,400 children and youths.
- 20,000 locally produced board books initiated under the early childhood development (ECD) project (6,500 completed by year-end) which is the first-ever mass production of board books in Ethiopia led by ER.
- 174 educators (librarians, teachers, school leaders and supervisors) were trained in different professional development programmes.
- 5th Annual Reading Summit convened in Addis Ababa with 100+ national and international participants.
- 2 major Children's Reading Festivals organised in Hawassa and Dire Dawa with 2,500+ participants (students, educators and community members)
- Strengthened partnerships with local communities, schools, government offices, Rotary Clubs, embassies and international supporters
- Continued to prioritise equity, inclusion and child-friendly approaches across all programmes and locations.



Emergency education and access to books

Ethiopia Reads completed the final phase of its Emergency Education Book Distribution Programme, delivering approximately 270,000 books to reach more than 500,000 children who had been out of school due to conflict or disruption.

Early childhood learning initiative

Ethiopia Reads began an important new partnership with the Addis Ababa city administration to launch an early childhood learning initiative for families with babies and young children, targeting 1.3 million children aged 0-6. This initiative is supported by the Van Leer Foundation. As part of this work, Ethiopia Reads' new creative and editorial team produced Ethiopia's first locally made board-book series, consisting of 10 original titles.



Reading festivals and community engagement

The year was also a celebration of reading across Ethiopia. Ethiopia Reads supported National Archive and Library Agency reading festivals in several regional cities, hosted its largest-ever children's reading festival in Hawassa, and, in partnership with the French Embassy, held another successful festival in Dire Dawa. Thousands of children, parents, librarians, and teachers participated in these events, demonstrating the role of reading in building confidence, creativity, and community.

Policy and advocacy

At a policy level, Ethiopia Reads continued its role as a founding member of the National Reading Network, contributing advice and policy ideas to the Ministry of Education. Ethiopia Reads also advised the Policy Studies Institute on issues relating to strengthening Ethiopia's reading culture and children's book ecosystem, and partnered with the Tayitu Cultural & Educational Centre in Addis Ababa to promote reading and storytelling.

Financial review

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The trustees intend to maintain a minimum reserve of £1,000 to meet unforeseen costs and administrative expenses, while deploying additional funds towards agreed charitable activities when appropriate.

Donated facilities and services

None.

Future plans

In the coming year, Ethiopia Reads UK plans to build on its UK launch by further raising its profile, broadening its supporter base, and identifying specific projects in partnership with Ethiopia Reads that the charity can support financially. Particular attention will be given to initiatives that promote reading engagement, including illustrated materials and comic magazines, and early childhood literacy.

Additional information

None.

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:



Charles Middleton

Trustee

Date 1st April 2026

