







# The girls of Ethiopia need you!

*"When I dream, I see myself running so fast that I can bring up our living standard and buy all the girls of Ethiopia sneakers."*

Sercalem Tesefay, Age 14

## *Consider:*

-  In Ethiopia, women and girls are more likely to die in childbirth than reach sixth grade
-  Girls as young as 12 can be sold as brides by parents desperate for dowry payments
-  Ethiopia has Africa's highest rate of vaginal fistulas, a tearing of the vagina that often afflicts adolescents during childbirth and requires painful reconstructive surgery
-  Ethiopia has one of the largest caseloads of AIDS in the world, forcing many girls to quit school and care for a sick or widowed relative
-  There are cultural taboos against girls walking long distances through desolate bush to school; parents fear rape and abduction, which are often carried out as a way to force a girl into marriage
-  Teenage girls in Africa are the most vulnerable population in the world: vulnerable to dropping out and being forced into domestic labor, ... forced marriages, or prostitution

There is a way out:



*Girls Gotta Run!*

Ethiopian girls need good reasons to persuade parents that they should be allowed to go to school and delay work and marriage. Running has proved a powerful incentive in a country where seven of the 10 top-earning athletes are women. For a girl, being able to run is a real statement of freedom that actually turns into power. Female runners are idols in part because of their financial success. If a girl can become a respectable earner, then why not delay marriage? Even in the most traditional rural enclaves, parents see the benefit in allowing girls to train, which means they must attend school because coaches pick race contestants.

Getting athletic shoes, however, is tremendously difficult. Inspired by their spirit and determination, and moved by their plight, a group of artists and others came together in early 2006 to form an organization to raise money to buy shoes for the girls: "Girls Gotta Run" was born.

**The Girls Gotta Run Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation, raises money to buy athletic shoes for Ethiopian girls to support their participation in sports and help them continue their formal education. Money is raised through art shows (participating artists donate at least 50% of the sales price of artwork we sell), and the sale of merchandise and memberships. To learn how you can help, please visit our website:**

**[www.girlsgottarun.org](http://www.girlsgottarun.org)**

*"Running gives girls a lot of options and makes our bodies our own. And even if everyone doesn't make it, training opens up ideas to teach, to be a coach, to do anything you try hard at."*

Olympic gold medalist  
Meseret Defar of Ethiopia, Age 22