

# Welcome to my home

by Bement Derege UKG St Yared student



Meet Bement, a thoughtful six year old in her second year at St Yared. She's missing her two front teeth and loves showing off the gap when she smiles. Bement and her mother graciously welcomed us into their home and shared some of the reality of their daily life.



Bement Derege is a bright and smiley student in the Upper Kindergarten class at The School of St Yared. Bement loves counting, so much so, that she is already taking maths classes one grade higher. This bodes well for Bement's dream of one day being a pilot!

Bement lives a long way from the school. She and her mother live in a small room in a row of corrugated iron shanty houses, in the slum area of Farensay. From the bus stop, they descend into a deep rocky gully and step across large rocks to the muddy bank on the other side. In July and August when the rains fall in Addis, the gully is a rushing stream, and both Bement and her mother wade through the water just to get home.

Their home is a small dark room, and despite the muddy lane outside, it is kept very clean. The walls are made of compacted mud and straw, and there is colourful linoleum stretched across the floor. Bement is an only child, and she shares a single bed with her mother, Almaz. Almaz sells vegetables on the side of the road to save money for food and rent. She pays 350 Birr (approx. AU\$15) per month rent.

Almaz wakes up at 5am every morning, and works until 8.30pm each evening. As well as selling vegetables, she also washes clothes for local families.

Almaz is uneducated and illiterate, and as Bement's father is not around, and she has no other children, she truly values the opportunity her daughter has been given at St Yared's. She knows that the only way to improve both of their lives, is for her daughter to work hard at school and get a good job when she graduates.



Bement and Almaz's room is approximately 50metres from a local toilet (pic above), which all families in their compound share. It is a long drop toilet, with a crisscross of sticks balanced on top, and as it is too dangerous for little children to use, there is a bucket outside their front door that Bement uses as a toilet.

