

DOL Ethiopia updates



I am excitingly planning my trip back to Ethiopia for April and May this year. I will be arriving in Jimma on Ethiopian Orthodox Good Friday so it will be a wonderful experience to share the Easter (Fasika) period with the Sisters and community. Unfortunately, it appears that it might also coincide with some school holidays but happily I was hoping to visit the children's homes and meet the parents and siblings anyway! Let's hope not too many have left the area to visit family...

Presently I am trying to fund-raise for the following projects which Sr Tsege has asked us to help with. If you would like to help us reach our goals and also boost your tax deductions at the same time here is what you need to do!

[DOL-S School Chair Campaign](#)

Since December 2017 we have been raising funds for 200 new chairs to replace those that have been broken over the years and for the delightful problem of not having enough as many children from the wider community are now wanting to attend the schools. This is an amazing achievement as the schools initially were only for the children from the leper communities and shows how the stigma for these children and their families is finally starting to dissipate! We are now down to funding only 30 more school chairs! Unfortunately, inflation has gone crazy in Ethiopia and the price of everything has doubled whereas a year ago \$25 would cover the cost of a chair we are now needing \$55.

DOL Ethiopia continued

DOL-S Kitchen Staff Uniforms and Materials

Sr Tsege has also asked for assistance with fund raising for the school kitchens which provide a meal every school day for the prep / kindergarten children from the leprosy community. The staff are requiring uniforms as well as other additional kitchen materials and utensils. I have been told that we will need around \$AUD1200 in funds to cover these costs.

DOL-H Leper Community Housing Repairs Campaign

It is now around 10 years ago since the WFA sponsorship program started in Jimma at that time many of the leper community had just moved into their first homes. Having a home has made such a significant and powerful change in these families lives - prior to this they lived on the streets or above the cemetery where they had been extremely vulnerable. The homes, as you can see in the photo, are predominantly built from wattle and daub and are now starting to need urgent repairs before the next wet season occurs. Sr Tsege and Kedouse have advised that the cost of repairs are between \$US500 - \$1000 per home!

Obviously this is going to be a long term fund raising effort by us all and I have also had WFA permission to promote on the Go-Fund-Me page - https://www.gofundme.com/leprosy-community-ethiopia?utm_source=internal&utm_medium=email&utm_content=body_photo&utm_campaign=upd_n If you know of any philanthropic persons or businesses who would like to help us out please point them in this direction!

Any donations would be so very, very welcome to any of the above projects! Please reference the code at the beginning (ie, DOL-S Chair, DOL-S Kitchen or DOL-H). Payments can be made via cheque, postal order or bank transfer. Should you wish to electronically transfer, the details are as follows:

World Families Australia sponsorship account (CBA Bank)

Name: World Families Australia
BSB No. 065-149
A/c No. 10342470

Betam Amersegnello!

Michelle Nethery (mobile: 0417 905 780 or michelle.nethery@gmail.com)



Above: School kitchen staff



Above: One of the homes in urgent need of repair.

Yohannes and the Sight Impaired Support Project

SISP is a grassroots project that tries to respond to the needs of the blind in rural Ethiopia, including access to medical assessment and treatment, provision of equipment like canes and recording devices, teaching Braille, training and funding teachers to teach both children and adults, funding small business initiatives for blind adults to help them support their families, advocating for the blind in the community and education system, and supporting families and blind youth and adults with house rent and food. In Bonga the program is administered by the wonderful Genet, who is an advocate and passionate about helping those affected by blindness and poverty.

This project was inspired by meeting Yohannes in Bonga almost ten years ago when he was about 10 years old. At that time his family lived in a tiny tukel (mud and thatch hut) which burned down not long after I met them. The family was destitute. Yohannes was the saddest child I ever met in my life. He reflects now on how he was rejected and ostracised in his community due to his disability with no opportunity to attend school or engage with the community. He spent his days isolated in darkness. Helping the family with building a new home and food security was relatively easy, but what Yohannes really needed and wanted was an opportunity to attend school and acceptance in the community. That took years of frustration, but I am so happy to announce that every bit of effort was worthwhile and this has been achieved.



Yohannes is extremely intelligent and consequently, despite only starting school about 5 years ago, he is already in **Grade 9**. He started at Shashamene Blind Boarding School when he was 14-15 years old despite their rule of refusal to admit children over 9 years of age (I begged). We funded a tutor and he went from grade 1 to grade 6 in three years, returning to Bonga for grade 7 two years ago. At the end of grade 8 students sit a national exam which they must pass to enter grade 9. He did very well and he is now at the Bonga Secondary School. Walking around Bonga with him was eye opening and humbling – not least because despite being 100% blind and not using a cane, Yohannes stumbled less than I did on the rough dirt roads and tracks.

This tall, humble, gentle, confident, intelligent young man has clearly gained everyone's respect and has singlehandedly changed the community's attitude towards blindness. His school peers eagerly greeted him and I was told that Yohannes was the one they would ask if they were lost and didn't know what classroom to go to, as Yohannes would remember everything he heard. His school principal talked about his exceptional attitude and leadership. Community members of all ages would greet him. What a difference to 10 years ago when no one would acknowledge him, invisible and rejected. Yohannes has not forgotten how this felt, and is deeply committed to helping other blind in Bonga – and did so while I was there. He hopes to study law. When visiting a young girl with me who was very depressed and feeling hopeless Yohannes told her; *"Eyes are only good for seeing the colour of someone's skin, and are not necessary for learning"*.

Waynetu

I met Waynetu with her two young children in the Bonga hospital last year. Waynetu's arms had been broken, and her baby's head slashed after she accidentally knocked the radio off a table of the man whose house she was boarding in. SISP funded her transport and medical treatment in Jimma, and provided care for her and her children. Once recovered, she returned to Bonga and SISP has been paying for her to rent a home. Both her children are now sponsored. Her eldest has returned to school. Life is still very challenging for them. The family were in rags and their home had barely a thing in it, so their poverty is still very extreme. Waynetu sometimes feels like giving up, but she is inspired by her beautiful children who help her – her 3-4 year old leads her to the market some km away. I gave them some donated clothing as they were all very cold, which they were delighted with. Genet provides her with support and has bought her two chickens. I am **hoping we might be able to build this family a house** and then build up the number of chickens.



Continued page 4

Sight Impaired Support Project continued

Funding needs

There are other blind children and adults being supported whose stories are not included here (or this will be a 20 page update), including two students from Jimma we are supporting to attend Shashamene Blind Boarding School, many students we fund tutoring and Braille materials for in the villages including one doing grade 12, students and families we fund rent and small business set ups for and so on. When we have enough funds, we will provide another teacher training in collaboration with the education authorities. We have hit the bottom of the barrel again of the SISF funds so any support toward the project is greatly appreciated. **All donations or ongoing sponsorship of the project are tax deductible.**

Please tell others about this project as we rely on 'word of mouth' to find support. Kind regards,

Sandi Petersen Ph: 08 8370 8965 email: rspetersen@optusnet.com.au

Newsletters by Email

If you have an email address, you can receive your financial statement and the newsletter *Impact*, electronically. This would result in a considerable cost saving for World Families Australia (approx. \$450 per quarter), enabling us to increase the amount of funds sent to our various projects overseas. If you would like to change to receiving information from us electronically, please contact Kerry at the office on:

wfafinance@bigpond.com

Aussie Fare

Aussie Fare has had a commercial relationship with World Families Australia for the past several years and we thank them for their support of the Ethiopian projects. Due to commercial considerations Aussie Fare find they are unable to continue with the relationship and WFA has now ceased the agreement with Aussie Fare. We thank them for their past support and wish them all the best in the future.

The logo for WOMADelaide features the word 'WOMAD' in large, bold, blue letters with a slight shadow effect, followed by 'elaide' in a smaller, blue, lowercase font. The letters are set against a white background with a subtle, light-colored pattern.

8th to 11th March

World Families Australia will again be having a stall at WOMAD. If you are attending WOMAD please stop in and visit with us. We are also looking for people who may be available for manning the stall in case one of the rostered volunteers is unable to attend. We will be having a stall at the 2020 WOMAD so if you would like to volunteer next year, please get in touch with Vicki at vhyde@westnet.com.au

Unknown Deposits

We have received two donations from people we are unfamiliar with. They are S. Roe, who gave us no direction as to where they'd like their donation to be directed, and Andrew Hewitt, who asked for their donation to be directed to Ethiopia, but not which project. If you know either of these people could you help us find out where to send the funds.

Meskele Kristos Ethiopia



This letter from Dee Hudson was received shortly before Christmas. I have included the article in this issue of IMPACT in the hope that the kitchen can be completed this year.

Our ongoing vision for Meskele Kristos is to assist the community with the construction of a kitchen and to also develop a sustainable feeding program, with the goal that the feeding program becomes self sustaining in the future. The hope is to improve the health of everyone in the school community and surrounding village. The outcome of the feeding program is to support students so they don't feel so hungry or ill throughout the day as a result of malnutrition, thereby providing an improved opportunity for education.

Our hope is to inspire the community, that through working together, much can be achieved. By combining our individual contributions we can make these visions possible. As you know over the last couple of years we been saving towards a school kitchen. We have had plans drawn up and quoted. We have been slowly chipping away at our fundraising target but unfortunately, Ethiopia revalued their currency in October 2017 which has impacted negatively on our savings.

This has been a big blow to all involved. It's true that this community faces some major challenges. I feel these challenges often overwhelm people and hinder progress. We need to remain focused in order to overcome these set backs. We have had to assess the obstacles and our vision, as we plan ahead.

We are acutely aware that no life will be transformed if we sit idle and that each of us has the potential to contribute. We continue to move forward with the goal of raising the needed funds to build the kitchen and establish the feeding program. As I look at what's in my hands, I see that I'm in a position to share about this project with others. Maybe you have similar opportunities, or maybe you have knowledge or experience that you could share to help develop this project, or relationships with others in third world countries who run feeding programs who I could connect with; maybe you have finances, or maybe you have time and would be willing to host a fundraiser to purchase chickens or cows for the feeding program or funds towards the kitchen construction.

If you would like to share contacts, have information you feel might be helpful or simply have questions, you can contact me via email at bendy98@bigpond.com or call me on 0404 454 390.

Together we strengthen each other and together we can make difference!

May you be inspired this Christmas season to discover new ways to love and support those around you and further afield, like our special friends in Meskele Kristos.

Much love,

Dee



Speakers are available to tell groups about the work of W.F.A.

Please contact us through the office: (08) 8258 7909

LAST DAY FOR YOUR GIFT THIS QUARTER

1st March 2019

Please Note

Articles for the next newsletter should reach the office by 30th April 2019

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WHEN YOU
CAN'T FIND
THE SUNSHINE,
BE THE
SUNSHINE!



Instead of worrying
about what you
cannot control,
shift your energy to
what you can create.

- ROY T. BENNETT,
THE LIGHT IN THE HEART

Opinions expressed by contributors to Sponsorship News are not necessarily those of World Families Australia

Editor: Diane Amato