



# ethiopian enterprises



## *Newsletter May 2022*

Cautious Optimism





## ***Dear Friends of Ethiopian Enterprises***

***It is now 10 months since the state of Tigray was locked up by the TPLF. During this time, the intermittent phone calls we have received from family members of our team or students from our scholarship program have suggested a mixed bag of circumstances. While we know that the death toll due to starvation throughout the region continues to grow, it appears that those living in rural areas have done better than those in cities like Mekelle. Nevertheless, two phone calls we received in Addis Ababa shortly before our Easter have given us cause for cautious optimism.***

***One came from a member of our scholarship program in Kukufto, Nigus Berwo. He was calling from the town of Alamata after managing to cross the border of Tigray (how, we do not yet know). He told us that he had seen many of our other students in Mehoni a few days earlier and that they were doing OK. We feared that many of them would have been recruited into the TPLF army, and we were greatly encouraged by Nigus' report.***

***We also received a call in the same week from a Mehoni contact who told us that school had restarted at Lemlem Baro School in the mornings. Equally pleasing was the news that a group of teachers from around our new school under construction, Mehoni Mersa, had collected young students from the area and were teaching in the mornings in the unfinished classroom blocks. The latter have at least a roof over them if no flooring or infrastructure so it is perfectly possible for children to be taught. We***

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- ***Food Aid to Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Kobo***
- ***Ethiopian Easter***
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Thank you from student Senait



*shouldn't forget that, until Ethiopian Enterprises started working in Mehoni, most students at any elementary school were having their lessons sitting on the floor as there were no desks.*

*There is so much we don't know due to the ongoing closure of phone and internet communications with Tigray. So you can imagine how important the messages which reach us from individuals we know are for us. We have continued our emergency aid to Tigrinians in IDP camps, most recently last month in Kobo (Amhara) and Addis Ababa (Amhara). The report below will tell you more about our activity over the past quarter year.*

## Scholarship program

On Saturday March 12th, EE president Thomas Baumann and project leader Lesley Stephenson met with our students from Addis Ababa University. We are delighted to report that all our freshman year students passed their final exams and have moved on to their second year in which their subjects are more aligned with their individual career choices. If

Getachew with his laptop



the timing of the second year start seems a little unusual to you, don't worry: it is indeed unusual. Most universities in Ethiopia have had to alter their semester plan to cope with the chaos in the education system resulting from

the combination of COVID-19 and the war. Still, at least the universities outside Tigray are functioning and enabling their students to move forward with their education.

We are now also in the process of supplying each of our university scholarship students with a laptop. Some of these were donated by private EE supporters Urs Weber and Eliane Tanner, and board member André Cardinaux. A further ten laptops were donated by Frank Geisler and his team from Labdoo in the canton of Zürich. The Labdoo group members work as volunteers to repair used laptops from various sources and supply them free of charge to organizations like ours. Six laptops have reached our students so far and a further



Dawit Fitsum with much needed new shoes

Labdoo laptop will travel to Addis with Lesley after our Easter. Students at university in Ethiopia are hugely disadvantaged if they do

not have a laptop as they then have to share one in the library with hundreds of other students. Our students are exceedingly grateful for their laptops and we would like to thank Labdo and our private donors again for their support. Our two fifth year students Getachew Tesfay (Environmental Engineering) and Abasieru Bili (Civil Engineering) received their laptops just in time to prepare their final presentations. They both received A/A+ passes and said they could not have done so well without their laptops.

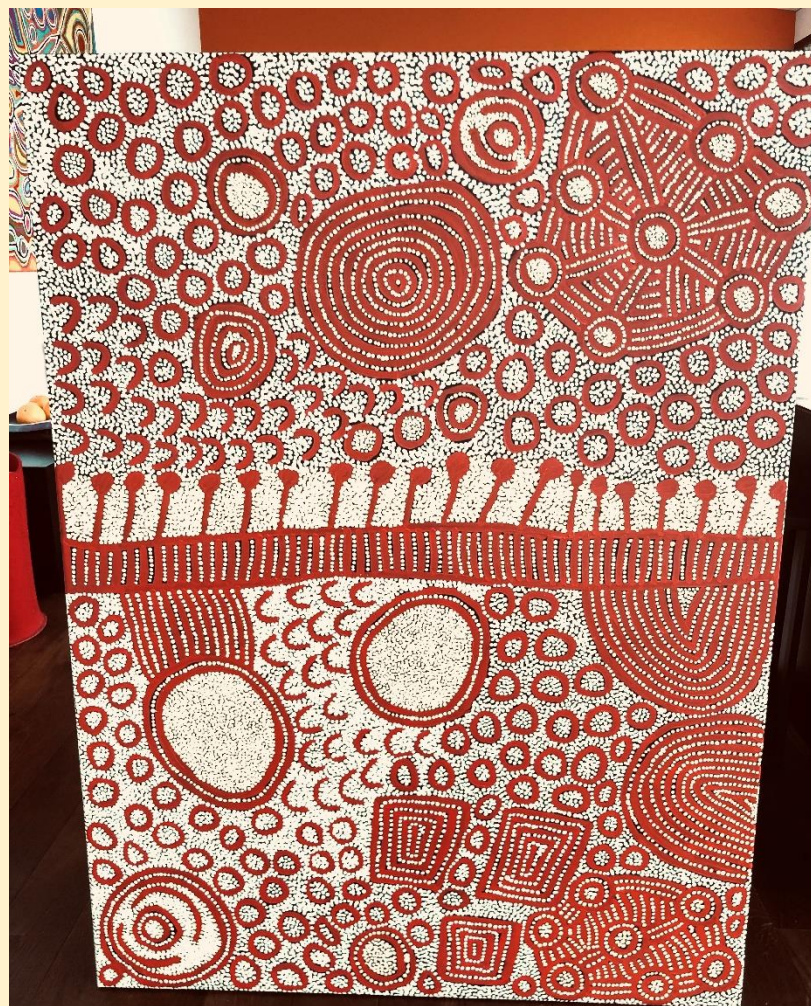
*„I have met with the majority of our students in Cher Cher, Mehoni and Kukufto, and they had survived the past few terrible months’*

There was some specially good news for us in the final week of March when Lesley and our project manager received a phone call from STIP student Nigus Berwo, one of our Kukufto kids. Nigus had managed to get himself to the town of Alamata where he had telephone connections. He told us that in the past month he had met up with the majority of our students in Cher Cher, Mehoni and Kukufto, and that they had survived the past few terrible months. Although we have no details, we were hugely relieved to receive this news and are sure that our STIP sponsors will be equally happy.

## **Ancestral Women**

In order to support our work in Ethiopia, we are offering a special treat to our art-loving members and donors. A unique painting by award-winning native Australian artist, Yinarupa Nangala, which has been part of a private collection since 2012, is now on sale in Switzerland and the proceeds will be donated in full to our work.

‘Ancestral Women’ is rich in the symbols of native Australian women’s traditional activities. Yinarupa has exhibited her paintings throughout Australia and the Pacific, and has won multiple awards. Her usual sombre tones are replaced in this work by vibrant red, yellow and cream which makes this work unique in her offering. A certificate of authenticity is included with the painting. (Please note that the grey tones in the photo below are in fact a yellow-cream in reality, similar to the background colour of this Newsletter!). The canvas measures 90cms x 120 cms and is stretched on a very light wooden frame. If you are interested in seeing the painting ‘live’, please call or email Ethiopian Enterprises. Selling price: CHF 3’500.



‘Ancestral Women’ by Yinarupa Nangala

## ***Food Aid to Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Kobo***

The state of Tigray has remained inaccessible to those outside its borders for the past 10 months. Families have been torn apart, and it is estimated that nearly 5 million people in the state of Tigray by now fulfill the definition of 'starving'. While we understand that such estimates are vague, the fact is that with virtually no food aid entering the state for months, and with the blocking of the banks in Tigray, the majority of those who are landless have run out of food and money. Those in rural areas appear to be faring better than city dwellers. It is a sign of the desperation of family members caught outside Tigray that a flourishing business of couriers has been set up in places like the region of Afar. These couriers carry cash into Tigray for a fee of 20% of the amount sent, and in the best cases provide the sender with a voice message or visual of the recipient with the money. However, this is risky business and in some cases the courier simply disappears along with the cash.

### ***They all, he reported, were 'still standing'***

And what of those who have managed to get out of Tigray? We have already reported that this is the case of several of our scholarship students who are now at university in Addis or further south. And as outlined above, we were overjoyed last month to receive a phone call in Addis last month from Alamata, a town which has been claimed alternately by Tigray and Amhara. One of our scholarship students from Kukufto, Nigus Berwo, was calling to tell us he

had managed to flee Tigray, and that prior to his departure he had seen several of the other students from our program in Mehoni. They all, he reported, were 'still standing'.

There is a much sadder plight, however, facing thousands of families from the areas of Raya-Azebo, Alamata and Bala, who fled from the TPLF and who have now taken refuge in camps in the Amharan region of Kobo. These camps are known as IDP camps (Internally Displaced Persons) and there are several such camps in Kobo, several with thousands of refugees. Ethiopian Enterprises was asked by the former interim government from our project region to try and help three of these camps. One is full of individuals who fled from our project region of Raya Azebo (several of whom know us personally), another was full of those who had



left the Alamata region. The third was occupied by individuals from the Amharan town of Bala which has been held by the TPLF for several months.

Our emergency funds have of course been sorely depleted by the war, but we managed to secure USD 20'000 for a small allocation to these three camps. Six weeks ago in mid March, while Lesley 'held the fort' in Addis, our manager travelled to Bahir Dar where he met his team with whom he had made his earlier Amhara allocations. The group purchased 125 quintels of rice (12'500 kgs) and hundreds of litres of cooking oil and then travelled to these

three camps for which they had lists of carefully selected recipients. Many of the latter had special needs, they were desperately ill and/or starving. Apart from the Red Cross which had supplied cooking utensils to these camps, very little aid has reached the thousands of people staying there and of course those who received no rice from us were sad and angry. We fully understand that, but without further emergency funding there is

there have been many verbal and written testimonials from the regions we have supported thanking us and our donors for our support. We couldn't do this without so many of you.

## *Ethiopian Easter*

It has taken us quite some time to become used to the Ethiopian calendar. There is a seven year difference between the latter solar calendar and our Gregorian calendar, so this year of 2022 is 2015 in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian calendar year has 12 months of 30 days each, and a short 13th month of 5 or 6 additional days. The important religious and family festival of Easter often falls a week apart from our own Easter, and this year was no exception. For us in 2022, Easter in Ethiopia took place on the 23rd/24th of April (2015).



Impressions from food allocation in the IDP camp in Kobo



nothing we can do. We also know that there are thousands of Tigrayans, some from our region, staying in similar camps in the Afar region and they are reported from trusted sources to be starving. This is incredibly sad and frustrating for us all. While we continue to be proud of what we have been able to do with a tiny team and very small budget, we could do a great deal more with additional emergency funding. In any case, we do what we can, and

It was a hard time for all those Tigrayans currently living outside Tigray and separated from their families now for the past 10 months or more. Lesley returned to Addis Ababa following our Easter weekend and joined our Tigrayan team members and scholarship students for the Ethiopian Easter weekend. Several of our supporters provided her with Easter chocolate and she and our team were able to share this with our

students at the university, our team members, and displaced Tigrayan families in Addis Ababa. We also took chocolate to the Bright Future daycare facility in Addis which cares for children from a slum region in Addis. The children and their families are carefully screened before being accepted into the program. Once accepted, they are allowed to visit the facility every afternoon after school. Here they receive a snack meal each day, followed by a 90-minute coaching class in a

variety of subjects. Local teachers are employed to deliver tutorials on various subjects and the students are able to fill gaps they may have in their schooling with the help of these carefully selected teachers.

All the recipients of the chocolate loved their small eggs, bunnies and other chocolate treats. Cathy Kennard, Tatjana Meier, Karin Mathis, Diana Munzlinger, Tanja Homeister, Jacqui Nicolella: thank you all so much for your help with this special activity.

*School has restarted at Lemlem Baro Elementary School as well as at Mehoni Marsa*

As outlined in our introduction, we have received some good news from a member of our construction team in Mehoni. He told us that school had restarted in the mornings at Lemlem Baro Elementary School, and also in our second school under construction, Mehoni Mersa. Although the latter is incomplete, with roofs on the classrooms it has been possible to begin teaching on the new school site. If this report is true, it is good news indeed. We are eagerly awaiting the photographs which have been promised to us.



Bright Future day care facility in Addis Ababa



## *And finally...*

We were moved to receive a lot of feedback from many of you about our dog Grace and her puppies. Several of you have written in the past weeks to ask how they are getting on, despite the fact that this is not an EE project but a privately-funded initiative of two of our board members.



'Team Grace' as we call this project has provided us with experiences we could not have imagined. Bringing up young dogs in a place like Ethiopia where veterinary care is poor at best and where animal care and protection is insignificant would have been hard enough. But towards the end of February, between their first and second vaccinations against a variety of nasties, our poor pups succumbed to infection with the dreaded Parvo Virus. Our vets warned us that we would likely lose half of them and, given the shocking

severity of their symptoms, we feared the worst. Even in the city of Addis there is no stationary veterinary care, but at least some vets are prepared to travel to their clients' homes. Without this service, we probably wouldn't have made it as the dogs had to have infusions for several days as well as round the clock monitoring from our carers. Lesley was up for many nights placing warm compresses on little tummies to relieve their stomach cramps, and helping to maintain the best possible hygiene for eight dreadfully sick dogs.

We are so relieved to say that – likely due to the fact that their vaccinations had begun and that their nutrition and care had been ideal – all eight pups survived, much to the amazement of the two vets with whom we work. In our street alone, three puppies belonging to a breeder, all of whom had contracted the highly prevalent virus some weeks earlier, had died.

When their very strict vaccination and quarantine period is completed this summer, at least six of these young dogs will be coming in pairs to Switzerland to seek their new families. They are smart, beautiful, and very loving. Should you be thinking of opening your home to a dog/dogs and wish to know more about adopting them, please let us know as soon as possible.

## *Many thanks to you all*

Once again we thank all our supporters and donors for the continued help we have received, despite the fact that we still have no access to our school projects in Mehoni. A special thank you also goes to all participants of the 2022 edition of our "Böögg-Aid". With this initiative, related to a traditional Zurich celebration, we were able to raise almost CHF 800 for our Emergency Relief Fund.

**Lesley, Caroline, André und Thomas**



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**The Team:**

(anti clockwise)

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**Thomas Baumann, President and Project Leader**

**Melkamu Abate, Project Manager in Ethiopia**

**Caroline Barlow, Committee Member**

**André Cardinaux, Committee Member**

