



ethiopian enterprises

Newsletter December 2023

The legacy lives on





Dear Friends of Ethiopian Enterprises

At our members' meeting in May this year the board members of Ethiopian Enterprises presented their recommendations to discontinue work on a second school in Mehoni (Mehoni Marsa) and not to invest in the repair of damage at Lemlem Baro Primary School. Our recommendations were made with eyes wide open and were based on many clear facts. Amongst others, the region remains politically unstable and it is hard to have trust or confidence in the future collaboration with a region which is a TPLF bastion. Also, a very important fact in the case of Lemlem Baro School is the negligence of school leaders during the war towards the school. The large part of the damage to the school was not caused by fighting but by the careless attitude of leaders towards this unique resource, and by theft.

Our members voted in agreement with our recommendations and the strategy presented for a soft phase-out of Ethiopian Enterprises. Still, all is not yet over. For the time being, we have agreed to complete the kindergarten building which was already close to completion before the war broke out, and to continue the student scholarship program. For these decisions there are sound arguments as this Newsletter shows.

We have made huge efforts to support the Raya region over the past eight years and we know that our ideas and principles will be carried on by many of our young beneficiaries. That this is already the case is evident from the stories below. A legacy has been created and may continue to bear fruit.

In this edition

- ***Garden Club boys***
- ***Scholarship program – two initiatives***
 - ***Delivery and distribution of school material***
 - ***Summer workshop at Lemlem Baro School***
- ***Emergency aid in Amhara***
- ***Kindergarten Lemlem Baro***
- ***School projects Lemlem Baro***

Garden Club boys

Remember the garden club from Lemlem Baro? As the borders of Tigray started to reopen earlier this year, some of our scholarship students managed to get seats on overcrowded buses to risk visiting their families. We sent bags of clothes and food with them to our garden club boys, not knowing if the boys were even still alive. But they were, delighted with their gifts and looking much older than before the war (last seen live in Mehoni in September 2020). Of course Abel took over the operation of giving out the items. With his sense of justice and fair play he is suited to such tasks.

Student Initiatives

Our university graduate Getachew Tesfay collected donations through an online campaign to help over 2'000 families (ca. 6'000 school children) in his own region of Cher Cher in Raya to get the prerequisite exercise books and pens for attending school. Most rural families were unable to cover this expense of roughly USD 1 per child themselves for one pen and one exercise book. Like everything else in Ethiopia, stationary materials have been subjected to huge inflation over the past year.

Due to the corruption which is often seen in school administrations, Getachew and five colleagues visited several schools in the region and hundreds of families themselves in order to ensure that the pens and books reached their destinations. Given the lack of resources in Tigray, the materials had to be transported over 800 km from Addis to Cher Cher by bus but the young men organised and implemented this as well. At the schools they visited they were often asked to teach some lessons which they happily did.

Garden Club Boys with Abel (second from the Left) – Feb. 2023



Scholarship program

Despite all the problems for our project region in Raya created by the civil war, our scholarship program has flourished. This past summer two of our older students set up projects under their own initiative to help younger students in Raya.

Getachew distributing pens and books in CherCher



Ethiopian Enterprises supported the initiative with a donation which enabled Getachew to fulfil his objective of enabling 2'000 families to send their children back to school in August. And Getachew himself?

This young man has now begun an apprenticeship in his area of expertise – environment protection – with World Vision in Ethiopia. He successfully passed several interviews and has just begun the last month of a 3-month program. It is possible that he will receive a job offer from World Vision in the future. A donation to cover his costs during the apprenticeship was generously made by the Lotte and Adolf Hotz-Sprenger Foundation. We are deeply grateful to the latter and their representative Albert Kesseli for this support.

plan included a detailed budget, catering arrangements, class schedules, etc.

We agreed to fund the workshop which was held at Lemlem Baro School in July and August. Five teachers including Hiluf and a further member of our scholarship program were involved in the implementation and the workshop was deemed to be a great success.

We have also heard recently that final-year university student Tadele Kalayu has qualified for a paid apprenticeship with a top Addis IT company after successfully completing a series of interviews. Some of you may remember that Tadele and his twin brother Hailu were among our first pilot student group in Mehoni. They will complete university in summer 2024 and both have notched up stellar results throughout their studies.

Celebrating the successful completion of the workshop



Summer workshop – initiated by Hiluf Abay, an EE scholarship recipient

In May we received an application in professional Powerpoint format from one of our top students, Hiluf Abay. It presented a plan for an 8-week summer workshop for 100 students in their final high school year selected from 4 high schools in the Mehoni region. The

Emergency Aid in Amhara

In August Ethiopian Enterprises carried out its largest emergency aid operation in the state of Amhara. It was also our final emergency aid endeavour.

the desperate folk awaiting support. As a result of all this, many larger organisations, including the UN, simply stopped delivering aid for an extended period.

Ethiopian Enterprises does not transport grain, oil etc in trucks which show our logo. Our truckloads are comparatively small, our team is local and has carried out several such operations for us over the past 2 1/2 years. They are known in the refugee camps and amongst the poor. With their help, and by flying under the radar, we have saved thousands of lives.

However, our efforts have not gone unnoticed. During this last operation, our team was literally caught in cross fire between the TPLF and Amharan militia groups in a region where there were no prior reports of fighting. When the Amharan soldiers heard that the team was surrounded, they secured them safe passage to a 'house' outside the conflict zone where they had to stay for several days. They already knew of our work in the region and made every effort to ensure that the team remained unscathed.

Another round of food distribution ...



From the beginning of our activity in Ethiopia, emergency aid was defined as being outside our mandate. There are compelling reasons for this, the most important of which is the fact that large international organisations are far better equipped to handle the complex logistics of such operations and also have very different spending power. However, during the war we learned that the advantages of size and fame can turn sour. It was impossible for large operations to have the necessary control and their produce and trucks were frequently misused for weapon smuggling to the TPLF in Tigray. Not only that, but hundreds of trucks were hijacked by the TPLF and never returned to their starting points in Amhara. Food and water were regularly stolen from the trucks and given to TPLF soldiers instead of reaching

... to the poorest of the poor



Emergency aid in August was delivered to several villages and camps in the state of Amhara. Thousands of people received rice, oil and soap. Sanitary pads were delivered to women in the camps where hygiene is precarious. At the current time we still receive regular urgent requests for further support. Lesley was in Addis Ababa in October and was visited there by the former chief of police for the Raya region. When he had criticised the TPLF early in the war he lost his position in which he had helped so many, and had to flee to Addis as there was a price on his head. He told Lesley stories of hundreds of families in similar situations who had no money for even the barest essentials. The shock waves of the civil war will be felt in Ethiopia for many years to come and it is now up to state-funded organisations to handle the growing need for food aid.

Kindergarten

Although we agreed at our members' meeting to leave the repair of damage to the primary school to the local authorities, we also agreed that we would finish the building of the kindergarten which was nearing completion when the war broke out and which was not damaged during the fighting. We have contacted our original construction team and they have ordered the materials they require. Building will continue again in the coming month.

There are many sound reasons for this decision. Clearly, the most important is our wish to respect the significant investment in the kindergarten made by the charitable Foundation Symphasis, as well as our wish to pass over the completed and valuable asset to the local community and Woreda before our work in the region comes to an end.

Kindergarten building March 2023



School projects

As discussed at our members' meeting, we are slowly winding down our activity in Tigray. The completion of the kindergarten (Early Learning Centre) at Lemlem Baro School will be our final construction project. While the scholarship program will continue until the current group of university students has graduated, this too will be our final student project.

We have seen this past summer that some of our students are now capable of living our principles and continuing our ideas. Now comes the time when they need to show that they can also plan and work independently of us.

Many thanks to you all

Again we want to thank the many supporters who have written to us since the send out of our last Newsletter. Your feedback has been supportive and heartwarming.

We wish you all a serene and joyous Advent.

Lesley, André und Thomas



Ethiopian Enterprises
Gartendörfliweg 11,
CH-8135 Langnau am Albis
info@ethiopianenterprises.org
www.ethiopianenterprises.org
+41 (0) 79 419 27 50

Bank details:
Raiffeisenbank Ägerital-Sattel
Postfach 463, CH-6314 Unterägeri
PCH: 60-7369-0
IBAN: CH95 8080 8006 0377 9375 5
BC-Nr. 81459 / Swift: RAIFCH22
Paypal
info@ethiopianenterprises.org



The Team:
(anti clockwise)
Lesley Stephenson, Committee Member and Project Leader
Thomas Baumann, President and Project Leader
Melkamu Abate, Project Manager in Ethiopia
André Cardinaux, Committee Member

