Exeter – Ethiopia Link
The Exeter-Ethiopia Link was set up in 1987 to promote a Community Link between Exeter in Devon, England, and Hareto in Wollega, Ethiopia. In 1994 the Link was extended to include Nekemte, the principal town in Wollega.

The Link supports Health, Water, Education and Women’s Projects in Hareto, Nekemte and surrounding areas. It also provides information to the people of Exeter on life in Ethiopia.

For further information contact:
Mark Howells on 01392 202713
or view our website at
www.exeterethiopialink.org

A disability club created as part of the Integrated Education Project

‘Carrying out examinations at Nekemte Eye Clinic

Annual Report
2016
Trustees Report

Exeter-Ethiopia Link (EEL) had another very successful year in 2016 despite the political unrest that plagued Ethiopia during the year. In addition to this, more water and tree-planting projects were completed, and more support to the eye clinic was planned. We continue to maintain a good financial position and are developing our governance structures.

Education projects
In the field of Education we have continued to develop projects with our partners DASSC. The three year project funded by Comic Relief is a project to provide libraries, books, librarians and reading centres, with training and support for teachers and librarians to improve the standard of literacy. Political unrest caused a delay in delivering the project in the first year and we were granted an extension to the timetable of the project, so the first year finished at the end of December 2016. During this year we developed libraries and reading centres with training and support in 27 schools in Nekemte town and the rural district of Wayu Tuka. Already there is evidence of the impact of this project in improved examination results.

Finance
Because of the situation in ‘our’ part of Ethiopia during 2016, we did not send as many grants out there as we would have liked, particularly to smaller projects. Consequently we have a lot of cash in our bank accounts which we hope will begin to move this year. As always our supporters have nevertheless continued to be so very generous. Our systems have improved and so we are in a good position to cope with whatever we undertake. We have also improved the format of our year end accounts (which are available separately) with all the relevant figures for your information.

Partnerships
Our primary Ethiopian partnership with EECMY DASSC continues, as does the Estepona Ethiopia Link (a Spanish charity formed by two members, Richard Hayes and Emilie Tieken) who have once again raised funds for projects in Nekemte. Partnerships between Exeter University Peninsular Medical School and the Nekemte University Medical School and between Plymouth University Institute of Education, and the Nekemte College of Teacher Education.

Thanks to our partners, funders and supporters
We would like to thank all our members for their continued support, as well as our grant donors who are listed in the Annual Accounts. EEL also depends on the dedication of our volunteer committee members and partners (mentioned above), who work to enable the Link to achieve great things with limited financial resources. Finally, thanks to Peter Grainger who stepped down at the 2016 AGM, and to for all the years of dedication and commitment to EEL activities.

Exeter-Ethiopia Link Trustees:
Bruce Hebbard
Emma Sarton
Valerie Huggins
Rupa Chilvers
Kirsten Pullen
Mark Howells (ex-officio)
Dick Benn (ex-officio)
Disability projects
During the past year EEL launched a new sponsorship scheme for students with hearing impairment. The scheme is new in two ways: first, this is a new area of sponsorship for us; second, we have adopted a new approach. Rather than inviting you to sponsor a named individual, we now invite contributions that, together, will sponsor a group of individuals. By operating a collective sponsorship scheme we aim to reduce the risk of paternalism and dependence, and allow individuals to benefit in a more collaborative way. We are very grateful to sponsors of this new scheme. Their money is helping support over 30 students (women and men) with hearing loss who wish to continue in secondary education with the goal of attaining a place at technical college or university, but who would, without financial help, be unable to afford the additional costs involved. The fund supports the students to receive additional tuition, helps with the cost of books and we hope to find accommodation that will enable the students to live together in one building. The fund also helps establish income generation projects so that the students can contribute to their own upkeep. Please see online for more information.
http://www.exeterethiopianlink.org/sponsorship.html
http://www.exeterethiopianlink.org/disabilities.html

In previous years UK teachers were able to access funding from British Council to visit their partner school in Ethiopia. However, owing to a change in the criteria to access funding from British Council, it has not been possible for any UK teachers to visit this year. Nevertheless the 12 Devon/Nekemte school partnership links have continued to develop with several exciting shared projects. This has been helped by the encouragement given by Gobena Atomsa to the Ethiopian schools.

Inclusive education Project
The Inclusive education project funded by UK AID is nearing completion. It has been successfully implemented in Nekemte, Waya Tuku and Digga in over 100 schools. Communities, schools and disabled children have benefitted from the setting up of disability clubs where parents and careers of disabled children have had access to income generation and training. Schools and teachers have attended training and have received support from local government offices. Children have had access to assistive devices, surgeries and support from the team and many more have had undergone testing and screening for disabilities.

Inclusive education Project

Key to the success of the project has been the development of strong partnerships with local government and schools by the team in Nekemte. Temesgen, Gobena, Aregash and Gelani in particular have worked tirelessly to identify disabled children and provide support.

‘Penny Pullen with students at the Birka Bekumsa disability unit’
Inclusive education Project (continued)
This has been in the face of difficulties due to the political situation, challenges in sourcing the right kind of assistive devices according to need and accessing all the schools in the project. However, the team both here in the UK and in Ethiopia have worked hard to overcome these and we will meet the targets set at the start of the project. We recently received the news that UKAID have given us a no cost extension to utilise the funds that were unspent due to the recent difficulties and that they were impressed with the gains made despite the issues. We will commission an evaluation of the project to be completed by September this year and will share the results when they are presented to EEL.

Early years education
Until recently children did not start school in Grade 1 until they were 6 years old and often much older. It is now universally acknowledged that this late start disadvantages them. The government called on schools to provide O Grade classes, but there was no curriculum or resources or even a teacher. EEL in partnership with Plymouth University has pioneered the introduction in Nekemte of O Grade classes for younger children. An EEL member (Valerie) from Plymouth University Education Dept. is leading an Early Years’ Education training programme working with Nekemte College of Education.

Health and Welfare projects
The Health and Welfare sub-group has had a longstanding relationship with the charity Vision Aid Overseas (VAO), for example they provided some equipment when the Eye Clinic was being constructed. In 2016 VAO agreed to add an assessment visit to their pre-arranged programme if Exeter Ethiopia Link could give some financial support. As a result a team of 6 volunteer optometrists spent 2 weeks in Nekemte in spring. Political unrest marred their visit but we are delighted to report that VAO want to continue to support skills development and plan to return in Autumn 2017. Plans are also afoot for the Eye Clinic to be integrated into the Regional hospital.

Water & environmental projects
In 2016, 6 new springs were capped in rural communities; 2 in Wayu Tuka and 4 in Guto Gida. These are welcome developments for the villagers which will make collecting water cleaner and easier.

More active teaching using visual displays in an O grade class.

A capped spring in Guto Gida