

EXETER - ETHIOPIA LINK

January 2004 Newsletter

in association with Devon Aid

Linking Exeter in England with Wellega in Ethiopia

November 2003 emergency visit to Nekempte

Dr Hugh Sharp, Catherine Sharp and Alex Taylor formed the Link team that responded to Qes (Rev) Alemu Nega's request for urgent help. The road from Addis Ababa to Nekempte has deteriorated further and the journey in Thomas's minibus took around 9 hours. We were pleased to fall into our comfy beds in the church compound. The next three days were packed with activity; assessing the hospital situation, viewing projects, meeting friends and making new ones and, of course, avoiding the mossies!

Managing the malaria outbreak at Nekempte Regional Hospital.

The region is experiencing the worst outbreak of malaria in 20 years. It has been a disaster, with many lives lost. We learned from the District Medical Officer that extensive outreach work and training of village health and community workers has lately helped to stem the flow of people coming to the hospital from the rural areas. Initially it overwhelmed the infrastructure of the hospital (which serves 2 million people). Two tented wards have been



erected and a corrugated iron building with four wards has been built (see the drips in use).

In order to cope the hospital restricts the number of people going to outpatients to 200 each morning and again in the afternoon. Staff are therefore under tremendous strain, but have used a great deal of ingenuity to ensure that people are treated.

Drips are suspended from tree branches, mattresses have come from the Teacher Training College and beds have been reclaimed from a dump but are barely useable. Without blankets the patients were cold at night.



Following discussion with hospital staff the Link immediately bought 100 blankets and sheets, and mattress protection. This photo shows Alex with one of the 'bales' of blankets and some of the hospital staff.

To encourage the 16 cleaners to keep the main hospital clean aprons and gauntlets will be bought in Addis for them. Finally and most importantly a water source used by patients and relatives near to the temporary wards was very unhygienic and an increasing health hazard. The remainder of the British Embassy Grant and some additional Link money will see that the area is made safe and a nearby refuse dump is isolated from the public.



We presented Drs Kebede, Isaya, Bikilla, and Alemayhew with textbooks in recognition of the hard work they are doing at present.

As we left we heard the good news that a big consignment of drugs have arrived, and later we were told that the situation had been publicised on television.

School for the Deaf in Nekempte

In addition to Jenny Merritt, her assistant Selamawit, and some Community Development Assistants namely Berhane and Wakshum there are two care staff, a cook and a housemother (two are deaf). There are 26 boarders and 11 day children. We arrived when Cheshire Homes were fitting calipers for children in the neighbourhood. We also saw children in class watching TV. Jenny has achieved wonders with the buildings in a short time.

Land had been given for the school about 20 years ago by EECMY but was never developed. Jenny came expecting to build on this land. Last year the school was to be made at Hosanna. Then the government handed back the land and buildings and so Jenny moved again. Gradually as people are moved out of houses on the perimeter the school takes over. Eventually it will have a very large site.

Children learn to sign in Amharic. Jenny has worked ceaselessly and is very humble about her extraordinary achievements. She greatly values and appreciates the support that is growing from the Link.

The Donkey Project

By December all the money currently allocated from the Jan Greet Memorial Fund will have been spent. Women in three parishes now demonstrate the value of donkeys. There are 30 donkeys in the project and Qes Alemu provides a three day training for project participants. Each parish has a co-ordinating committee to oversee the project. We were pleased to meet the Chair of the Sorga group.

Subjects discussed include causes of poverty, how to improve the family situation, saving money, child health and nutrition and care of the donkey. There is great enthusiasm from our colleagues in Nekempte to expand the project and every visit shows that this simple idea has had a very direct impact on people's lives.

Before.....



.....and after



A visit to Agetu and her family in Sorga

We visited Agetu and Daktu who are new donkey owners. Agetu is a single parent with two children, a little daughter and a boy who is doing well in 5th grade.



Alemu with Agetu's little daughter.

We learned that the her sister Abebu and her children had recently moved into Agetu's house. Abebu's husband and his brother had just died from malaria. The family had barely enough milled maize for three days. Fortunately Alemu has arranged for Agetu to regularly supply wood to a restaurant in Nekempte.

Water projects

Discussions with Thomas Tamesgen (Head of EECMY Development) indicated that the grant from the German Embassy for a number of projects (for example piping water for the Health Clinic in Hareto, and deepening wells) will be fully deployed by this April. The project has been somewhat delayed by the malaria epidemic. It was pleasing to learn that a government department is providing some staff to help to deliver the project alongside Tadewos Mergerssa the water engineer now based in Addis.

And finally.....

This all too short visit to Nekempte deployed funds directly to the most urgent projects that fell within the remit of the Link. It demonstrated that we all mind greatly what is happening in Nekempte and Hareto. We experienced the unbounded hospitality, kindness, and high regard in which the Link is held. Our special thanks go to Alemu for organising an intensive programme and giving his energy to accomplishing it without a problem.

Alex Taylor

Alex received the following e-mail shortly after her return from Ethiopia.

We don't have words to express but we can't keep silent about you remembered us in the days of darkness, helping our people who are in grave or counting their days hardly to breathe, suffering between life and death as you saw the epidemic of malaria which has worsened after you left. Your great help of improvement of the water sewage system is also much appreciated.

Now we are waiting for the day of life and rejoice hoping the epidemic will come down. We all thank you and are grateful to you for your valuable services. We appreciate the holy help to us for the suffering around us and society which is beyond our mind to express.

Thank you again and again.

Dr. Alemayhew Eba
(acting Hospital Director)

Our thanks go to Global Aircare and other anonymous donors for providing items to raffle in support of the recent visit to assess projects.

Jane's Coffee Morning

Many thanks to Jane Asten of Prospect Park for hosting a pre-Christmas coffee morning with a difference at the beginning of December.

The coffee served was organic, fairtrade and Ethiopian, in fact from the Oromia Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union, which Jane was able to obtain from Equal Exchange in Edinburgh (www.equalexchange.co.uk).

Traidcraft were also invited, and they sold their products with the profits donated to the Link.

The morning was very well attended and raised £175 from members and many local neighbours and friends.

Exeter-Ethiopia Link Annual General Meeting

This will be held at Peter and Jill Grainger's house at 8 Prospect Park at 6.30.pm on Saturday 6th March.

The meeting will follow our usual format of:

- getting the business done first
- a meal (all contributions for this are welcome!!)
- talks to bring people up to date with the various current developments in the Link.

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 Wellega, Ethiopia. In 1994 the Link was extended to include Nekempte, the principal town in Wellega.

The Link supports-

Health, Agricultural and Educational projects in Hareto and Nekempte, and encourages educational links between schools in Exeter and the communities in Ethiopia.

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- ❑ **Peter Grainger and Mark Howells will be visiting Ethiopia this Easter. Anybody wishing to join them should contact Peter (details above).**

Any copy for future newsletters can be sent to the editor, Bruce Hebbard, at

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Devon Aid / Exeter-Ethiopia Link

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