

EXETER - ETHIOPIA LINK

November 2004 Newsletter

in association with Devon Aid

Linking Exeter in England with Wellega in Ethiopia

Our man in Hareto

During Peter and Mark's visit to Ethiopia in April 2004 we asked Garedew Derara to act as our local representative for Hareto, the small town that was our original link partner. He wrote in the last newsletter about going to school there and how he lost his leg. His mother and family still live near Hareto, but he is now in the final year of his degree studies at Addis Ababa University.

He arranged to visit Hareto in September and we sent him with a camera and film (Peter Kiddle gave him some lessons in photography), two kerosene lamps for the clinic, and some questions to ask.

Here are the edited points from his written report and two of his photographs. He was helped by his university friend Mollalign Megassa, also from Hareto.

My visit to Hareto 24-30 September

I drove to Hareto on 24 September using public transport. Although it was tiring I could reach Hareto peacefully after ten hours journey. I visited the clinic, high school and elementary school and came up with the following information.

Hareto Clinic

I met the head of the clinic, Jiregna Namie, and the District Health Office Representative, Obsa Bayissa, and handed over the kerosene lamps.



Malaria has been spreading over the area again this year, with 15.6% more cases than this time last year. The spreading of malaria in August and September is unusual, showing that it will possibly be much more serious in October/ November which are conducive for mosquitoes to breed.

There are problems with the water supply. A connection to the local mains supply was made earlier in the year and sinks provided in the clinic, but the pressure is often too low or the supply interrupted. There is a need for a water tank to reduce the problem, by providing storage. *[The Committee have agreed that the Link will fund this water tank.]*

The head of the clinic says they also need more rooms, beds and transport.

Hareto High School

I visited the high school and met the new head, Dereje Kitessa. The school has 2,500 students, in grades 7-10. Of 330 students who took the Grade 10 National Examination, 181 students reached at least 2.0 points, fewer than last year but still good compared to other schools. It is very encouraging that all students who took the Grade 8 examination passed. As the number of students has been increasing from year to year, the school needs more classrooms, seats and books for the new curriculum to make the learning-teaching process effective.

He took me to the girls toilets and showed me that they were complete and in use. *[Funded by the Link.]* The boys' toilets are now becoming a problem. Also the water tank has not been cleaned and repaired as suggested. The Head says the cost outweighs that of a new plastic tank. The other problem that he would like the Link to consider is that the perimeter fence is falling from time to time as it lacks a strong, cemented base.

As part of a huge national project to equip all high schools with satellite TV for special educational programmes, Hareto High School has large plasma TV screens in its 18 classrooms. The Head says that the (experimental) use of satellite TV is broadening the knowledge of the students and giving the school a bright future.

Hareto Elementary School

I met Temesgen Jebessa, the head of the school. He says that the water tank has been connected to a tapstand and is functioning well. The school is expecting to have 2,450 students to teach this year in Grades 1-6. It is thought that Grades 7 and 8 will be part of the Elementary School in the future.

To this end, the community members have started building two blocks of eight classrooms by themselves.



Temesgen requested the Link to address the following problems. The school has a lack of benches (decreasing number because of the old age) and that the earth floors of the classrooms need cementing to reduce fleas and other parasites.

The heads of the clinic, high school and elementary school thanked the Link for its dedication to address their problems.

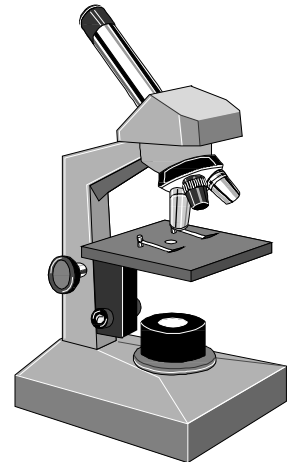
Garedew Derara

Any copy for future newsletters can be sent to the editor, Bruce Hebbard, at Cedar House, Pines Road, Exeter EX2 9EN (Tel: 01392-437479) or by e-mail to b.hebbard@talk21.com

**Devon Aid / Exeter-Ethiopia Link
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Improving eye health - Preventing blindness in Nekempte

A holistic development proposal to improve the welfare of many of the inhabitants of Nekempte currently being considered by the Link includes a project focused on eye health. In some areas of the world eye disease is the biggest health problem of all. Three quarters of the world's blindness or impaired vision arises from five conditions. Two are familiar to us - Cataract and Glaucoma, three arise from environmental conditions and poverty, namely 'Red Eyes'-Trachoma, 'Dry Eyes' - Xerophthalmia and 'River blindness'-Onchocerciasis. Cataract is treatable and the others are preventable. Therefore preventative strategies and relatively simple, and locally affordable, interventions will make a major impact on the level of blindness in a community.



Hot dry dusty air, poor nutrition and water and sanitation, diseases like measles, insects, lack of information or preventative/community medicine, and late referral underpin the pattern of eye diseases in hot climates. Health and hygiene promotion for the whole community, educating and convincing community leaders women and children, creating clean water sources, pit latrines, growing nutritious foods, managing rubbish, and examining all children under eight are fundamental activities in any eye health programme. Coterminal with those activities goes the training of community health workers and ophthalmic medical assistants (OMAs).



Kit needed is inexpensive - robust torches, magnifying lenses, and ophthalmoscopes will cover most detection work, and an expensive and immobile slit lamp could be added. The local manufacture of drops and spectacles is sensible. OMAs will be trained in low cost high volume surgical techniques and supervised by an ophthalmologist who in turn will offer the complicated treatments that would otherwise demand referral to Addis. An operating microscope may be the best way to support that practitioner but it is extremely expensive.

Generally it is recommended that eye health services should be mobile and flexible and ensure that there are people in the community charged with spotting disease and alerting the service.

'Education, Early Intervention and Enthusiasm'

seem to me to be the watchwords to prevent blindness.

Alex Taylor

'SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES'

Voices from Ethiopia

*at The Global Centre
17 St David's Hill EXETER
Refreshments available*

This text and photographic exhibition of Ethiopians, young and elderly, speaking for themselves about how life is for them in Ethiopia in 2004, has been compiled by Cathy and Peter Kiddle who have just returned to Devon after serving as VSO volunteers in Addis Ababa for the last two years.

They write, "...the Ethiopia we have come to know is about so much more than starvation and desperation... young Ethiopians agreed to be interviewed for the project, telling of their families, their lives and work, of good times and bad times in their lives and of their hopes for the future. They then edited and approved a short written text, based on their interviews... photographs have been taken and chosen by the participants to accompany the texts. Their stories reveal deep religious faith and a (sometimes desperate) belief in the value of education, alongside a common wish that outsiders will take notice of other views of Ethiopia."

After Exeter, this exhibition will be moving to The Museum of London.

7 - 9 pm Tuesday
18th January

For further information contact

01392-435648

News in brief:

- The enjoyable sponsored walk around Exeter in September raised £1,300.
- Devon Trade Justice Network Conference, 'Make Poverty History' 1-5pm on Saturday 26 February at Exeter Global Centre (see opposite).
- Link AGM, Saturday 12 March at 7pm.
- Bruce & Charmain Hebbard will be holding a plant sale next June, so start gathering plants NOW!

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 included Nekempte, the principal town in Wellega.

The Link supports: Health, Agricultural and Educational projects in Hareto and Nekempte and encourages links between schools in Exeter and the communities in Ethiopia.

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