

Report: Members' LinkUp Meeting 24 February 2022

We were delighted to be joined at the meeting by Murti Sagni who is our project co ordinator in Nekemte.

Mark Smith (Enable Ed director and project manager) and Murti updated us on the current projects:

Libraries and Literacy

We saw images of Gobena training librarians and teachers. This is the first training session they have received for 8 years. The attendees expressed their delight at this support for their work and they enjoyed sharing feedback.

UK Aid have highlighted the low level of literacy among girls and this, more than any other factor, is how we can best help girls in the Nekemte area. Many girls in grades 2 and 3 do not even have letter sounds. Class sizes are very large and, once a child is left behind, it is difficult for them to keep up in class and inevitably they drop out of education. We detail in the power point a pilot scheme for teachers to give additional tutorials to such girls.

Inclusive Education Project

Murti showed an image of a child she had helped to access disability support through a local organisation.

Deaf students continue to make outstanding progress with 35 students in secondary school.

The security situation is affecting the organisation of some meetings, however, schools are not affected.

Bike clubs

There are 13 bikes. This initiative is receiving much attention with the BBC recently interviewing Murti and some of the girls. It supports social and emotional learning. The girls have very little opportunity to engage in sporting or athletic activity and this increases their fitness and improves their mental health.

Discussion

The majority of the meeting was devoted to discussion of potential projects for The Year of the Girl.

The power point presentation which formed the basis for this discussion can be downloaded from our website at <https://exeterethiopia.org/index.html>

The conclusion of the discussion was as follows.

Funding for the projects needs to be carefully considered in terms of sustainability beyond one year. Realistically most projects which actually begin in September need ground work and preparation done between May and August.

Our list of projects for Year of the Girl;

1. We await the results of the literacy tutorial pilot projects in May/June. We expect results to be promising and if this is the case then we will fund. The number of schools we can fund will be dependent upon resources. Costs £50 per month per school to support 60 girls, i.e. less than £1 per girl per month.
2. We await the results of the literacy support librarian pilot projects in April/May. We expect results to be promising and if this is the case then we will fund. The number of librarians we

can fund will be dependent upon resources. £75 per year per support librarian.

3. Employing a deaf female librarian approx. £200 per year.
4. Girls clubs. We would like to support this initiative. The clubs already exist in schools. We will seek out one or two enthusiastic girls club leaders and find out how we can help to improve student engagement and outcomes.

For discussion/ investigation

- Expansion of the bike project. We need more detail. It also raises the question of whether there is an opportunity to support other sporting activity for girls in school, activities which may be less expensive to set up such as netball, football, running, etc.
- We would like to further investigate what affects girls' school attendance. Not only what affects their progression to secondary school but also what may cause them to drop out of primary school. Girls progress to secondary education at different ages, from 14 years of age. Caroline at Together We Learn has done some research into this and we will organise a meeting to discuss. We will then consider carrying out our own research if necessary. This would involve private conversations with a sample of girls.
- We highlighted the issue of toilet facilities and availability of water. In rural areas access to water is poor and critical. We hope to gather detail and feel that this could be a specific project area for 2023 and is not going to be part of our Year of the Girl.
- A deaf apprentice librarian and financial support for deaf students. This requires relatively small funds. The trustees will discuss the possibility of setting up a pot of money from which funds could be made available on an ad hoc basis to support living costs.

Fundraising and member engagement

- We hope that Gelane will be able to create a video presentation. We would use this to improve member engagement and potentially to share with schools and other organisations to support our fundraising.
- We will have a stall at the Respect Festival on 11th/12th June. If you are interested in giving an hour or so of your time to help to man the stall please email membsec@exeterethiopianlink.org
- Penny will contact Kalkidan regarding hosting events and sharing publicity materials.
- We will have a targeted week of events to raise funds for the Year of the Girl. We have pencilled in 4th to 10th July. We will encourage members to organise events such as sponsored walks/ runs/cycles, car boot sales, coffee mornings etc. We will provide targeted information around what a specific donation will provide and how it will help a girl in Nekemte.
- Mark has engaged schools in the Midlands who will have a fundraiser on Comic relief day and split their funds between comic relief and EEL.
- Penny's son is cycling from Lands End to John O Groats and splitting sponsorship between Alzheimers UK and EEL.
- Two members are running 10k's and donating the sponsorship to EEL.

- We hope to participate in the Big Give again this Christmas.
- Annie has been in contact with everyone concerning the Ethiopian Banquet and refunds have been processed where requested. She has a total of £780 for the Year of the Girl which is an amazing start!

There is clearly much work still to be done but the results can literally change a girl's life. If you can offer a few hours to support the trustees to maximise this amazing opportunity please email Dawn Swettenham at secretary@exeterethiopianlink.org

Present:

Dawn Swettenham, Mark Smith, Murti Sagni, Penny Pullen, George Dexter, Hilary Noakes, Ella Sadler, Liz Horsefield,

Apologies:

Annie Bainbridge Smith, David Scarbrough