

Dir Biyabir 2014 Annual Report

OVERVIEW

2014 was the most prolific year to date for Dir Biyabir. We funded a record 8 projects in various parts of Ethiopia, including a wrap up of our largest project to date, a 2 year project funded by a grant from The Christensen Fund for Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment. Other projects include construction of a bridge that was desperately needed by the villagers of Weyniye and Moy, education related initiatives in Addis Abeba, Northern Shewa, Gurage zone, and Gonder, as well as poultry projects with a Nunnery in Sebeta and school girls in North Shewa.

As always our projects were implemented by leveraging our partnership with small and effective community based organizations in Ethiopia. We continue to work with long-term partners such as



Villagers of Amoragedel

ADHENO, and we have formed some new partnerships with small non-profits founded by Ethiopians to expand the geographical scope of our projects. Our new partnerships

include Journey to Light (JTL) to implement some education projects in the Gurage zone. Based in the US, JTL (<http://www.journeytolight.org>) is a small non-profit founded to “support social, economic, educational and development projects in Ethiopia”. Other new partnerships in 2014 include the Gethesemane Betedenagil Tebabat Nunnery in Sebeta, Ethiopia, as well as the Atlanta based Grace

for All, GFA (<http://www.graceforall.us>). We were introduced to these organizations by two members of Dir Biyabir who continue to help us by also serving as the project leads. For the nunnery Dir Biyabir funded an incubator to hatch chicks, and for GFA we funded a new library for a center for homeless kids in Addis Abeba.

In April 2014 our Chairperson and another member, had the opportunity to make a very rewarding and insightful visit of our key projects in Ethiopia where they met with villagers, students, and our project partners. In particular the villagers in our project areas in Northern Shewa provided a very warm welcome to the Dir Biyabir team, and they were invited to several homes in the villages of Amoragedel, Kasset, and Moy. This visit provided invaluable insight into the significant impact of Dir Biyabir projects on the lives of people in Ethiopia and the update in his report includes this first-hand experience. We thank our members and donors for their support in making these projects happen, and we hope we can count on their continued support.

Leadership Team

There were no changes to the Dir Biyabir Leadership Team in 2014: Chairperson - Haeran Fisseha, Secretary - Aida Abate, Treasurer - Ksenia Siegel. As always, all Dir Biyabir positions are voluntary and uncompensated. The executive team continues to donate funds to cover 100% of Dir Biyabir operational expenses, thus guaranteeing that all membership fees, donations and grants are directly utilized to fund projects in Ethiopia.

MEMBERSHIP

Dir Biyabir is a membership based organization with a lot of our projects being funded by membership fees, so we are grateful to all our members, and especially our long-time continued members, for their critical support in making our projects happen.

As communicated to our members throughout the year, starting January 2015 Dir Biyabir has raised Silver membership fees from \$50 to \$100 per year



Medicinal plant in Kasset nursery

and Gold membership fee is raised from \$100 to \$200 per year. This is the first increase in membership fees since the founding of our organization in 2007. In recognition of some of our members who have

been donating at much higher levels for many years, we are also introducing the Platinum membership at \$500 per year and Diamond membership at \$1,000 per year. As always all membership fees are tax deductible and tax receipts are emailed to all members.

Dir Biyabir had offered the silver membership at \$50 to encourage students to join, but in reality none of our members are students, and fewer than 6% of our current members are Silver at the \$50 level. Based on the time and effort spent on processing membership fees, renewal reminder communications and follow up throughout the year, we are finding that it is not feasible to continue to offer membership at \$50 per year. Based on the results demonstrated by Dir Biyabir, we hope our current Silver members will continue their membership at the new level of \$100 per year. Current Gold members can keep their gold status in 2015 by increasing their membership fees to \$200 or they can continue at the \$100 level in which case their status will move to Silver.

Memberships levels starting January 2015:

- Diamond: \$1,000 per year
- Platinum: \$500 per year
- Gold: \$200 per year
- Silver : \$100 per year

Total membership in 2014 was 63, down from 65 in 2013. Of the 63 members in 2014, 52 were renewing members from 2013, 3 were re-activating lapsed membership from 2012 or earlier, and 8 were brand new members. The 2014 Membership total of 63 members breaks down as follows:

- 82% Renewing members (down from 84%)
- 5% Reactivating Members (up from 2%)
- 13% New Members (down from 14%)

Reminder to Members: Membership is annual and can be renewed simply by paying membership fees within the calendar year. Members are strongly encouraged to renew their membership as early in the year as possible. ***We continue to have a lot of renewals late in the year in October- December. We kindly request members to please pay their membership fees as early in the calendar year as possible.*** If members could target to pay their renewals by June of each year it would be very helpful as early renewal frees up our scarce volunteer time and effort to focus on projects rather than on reminders for membership renewal. We would really appreciate your cooperation in this area.

New or Renewing Membership can be paid by:

1) Sending a check (please include your email address) payable to Dir Biyabir to:

Dir Biyabir, P.O. Box 391532, Mountain View, CA 94039

2) Via Pay Pal on our website: <http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member>

PROJECT STATUS

2014 was a very productive year for Dir Biyabir. Our largest project to date, a 2 year Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment project funded by The Christensen Fund wrapped up on December 31, 2014 with very satisfying results. In May Dir Biyabir funded the construction of a bridge across the Beressa River thus connecting the villages of Moy and Weyniye in Northern Shewa. This funding was based on the urgent need expressed by villagers to our

Chair person. By August the bridge was completed and in use and in October ADHENO organized an inauguration of the bridge with the community. It was a very festive occasion. Other projects include education related initiatives in Addis Abeba, Northern Shewa, Gurage zone, and Gonder, as well as poultry projects with a Nunnery in Sebeta and school girls in North Shewa. We have summarized an update on each of these projects below.

Integrated Economic Empowerment and Environmental Rehabilitation

Located in Moy kebele, Bassona Worana Woreda of Northern Shewa, the goal of this 2 year project is economic empowerment and enabling the community to improve its livelihood while



*Qes Lakew manages Kasset seedling station
He is the expert on medicinal plants shown here*

nurturing and protecting the unique environmental and cultural heritage and biodiversity of this region of the Central Ethiopian Highlands. The project area has a population of

8,803 (48 % female) with an average family size of five. In November 2012, Dir Biyabir won a grant of \$86,300 from The Christensen Fund (TCF) to fund this project in full. The project was implemented by our long-term partners in Ethiopia, ADHENO. It was kicked-off in January 2013 and wrapped up on December 31, 2014. ADHENO worked closely with local villagers and after 2 years of hard work,

together they have registered these very impressive accomplishments:

A) Environmental

- 142,400 trees planted including over 70,000 indigenous trees (no eucalyptus was planted)
- 342 villagers including 80 women were trained on producing, nurturing and planting tree seedlings
- New nursery station established in Kaset Tig village, while an existing nursery station in Kaset Michael (from prior phase) was strengthened.
- Developed five closure sites covering 8 hectares (about 20 acres) of land. No grazing or human activity is allowed in sites so natural vegetation cover in this areas has now fully recovered.
- Over 140 types of traditional medicinal plants planted in the two nursery stations to preserve and improve the biodiversity of the area
- Farmers improved conservation of 590 hectares (1,458 acres) of land by building various soil and water conservation structures including contour bund, check dam, trenches and half moons. This has arrested soil erosion by reducing the speed of runoff water.
- Planted Vetiver grass on 2,000 square meter of land. Vetiver is deep rooted and holds the soil

Integrated Economic Empowerment and Environmental Rehabilitation (continued)

B) Economic Empowerment

- Constructed 11.5 km foot path which has significantly improved access to local market for over one thousand villagers so they can easily sell their products and gain economic benefit.
- 20 rural youth trained on bee-keeping and provided 26 bee hives. They are expected to produce over 400 kilos of honey.
- 80 women living in extreme poverty were organized into self help groups and trained on how to manage and save money and run a small business. They are now engaged in lucrative micro-enterprises including sheep fattening, preparing local spices, etc and have now started to generate revenue out of their business. Some of these women were trained on cotton spinning and they have now started to deliver partially produced cotton products to local textile producers and are earning additional income.
- 2,500 varieties of grafted orange, apple, mango, avocado, papaya, banana and coffee were distributed. 20 kilos of vegetable seeds including carrot, cabbage, tomato, onion, beet root were distributed. These fruits and vegetables are now producing and villagers have access to fresh fruits and vegetables for their own consumption as well as the opportunity to sell the excess and earn additional revenue.
- Two women potters were each given a donkey to transport clay as well as finished pottery. They had been previously carrying the load on their backs resulting in significant bodily harm
- Four traditional black smiths were given training to produce better products and provided tools. Now they repair farming equipment locally and farmers no longer travel far for repairs needed.

C) Education and Health

- Constructed 2 springs which are now providing clean water to over 100 households (about 500 people). The springs were constructed in the villages of Amorageled and Meskelyes and both



New Spring constructed at Amorageled

- have a reservoir with capacity of 4 cubic meters.
- 42 residents (10 adults and 32 children) were examined for intestinal parasites, and de-worming treatment was given to all positive (100% of adults and 59% of children) in collaboration with Debre Birhan University.
- Constructed one classroom block consisting of three separate classrooms at the Amorageled Satellite school. This has enabled a total of 150 local village children from grade 1 to 3 to attend school without traveling very long distances
- Organized experience sharing visit to the Konso area in Southern Ethiopia, attended by 15 farmers (including two women). Farmers studied and learned from traditional soil and water conservation practices of the Konso people.
- Completed construction of a community center that villagers had started but were unable to complete. Equipped the center with training modules, bee hives, fuel saving stove, as well as materials used for weaving, metal work and pottery. This center has become a meeting place for the community to discuss their issues as well as training center to learn new practical skills.
- Adult education provided to 287 farmers (87 women) to reach an acceptable level of literacy as well as basic health and hygiene issues.

Education Initiatives

A- School Sponsorship- Northern Shewa

In 2014 Dir Biyabir continued support for a school sponsorship program that was kicked-off in 2012. The program was proposed by our local partner ADHENO to sponsor the education of girls in seven kebeles in Bassona Worana Woreda in Northern Shewa. ADHENO identified that there are many girls in the area who wanted to attend school but were unable to afford even basic school material. In 2013 Dir Biyabir had sponsored 139 elementary school girls and 16 secondary school girls.

In 2014 Dir Biyabir continued support for the 139 elementary school girls. The total annual annual cost for supporting each elementary school student is \$43. The fund is used to cover expenses for school supplies and uniform.

In 2014, in addition to the 16 high school girls in the program, we were able to add 12 new girls through the generous donation of two individuals bringing



Dir Biyabir sponsored high school girls

the total number of sponsored high school girls to 28. Dir Biyabir has committed to support the education of all 28 girls through the end of high school. During her April visit, the Dir Biyabir chairperson was able to meet with the sponsored high school girls and discuss their needs. Based on their feedback, 2014 sponsorship was increased to include additional books and a group tutor. Total annual cost per high school student including rent for a local room, school supplies, uniform, and supplemental books is \$131. The parents are responsible for providing them food. Dir

Biyabir will continue to sponsor these kids every year until they finish high school.

B- School Books - Southern Gonder

“Worku Jenber School” is a school in Gela Matebia, Southern Gonder, which is located in Northwest Ethiopia. It was built 3 years ago by Dr. Adugnaw Worku who was himself a farmer’s son from that area who struggled hard to get access to education. Having fulfilled his personal goals, Dr. Adugnaw



Worku Jenber students with new books

gave back to his community by building this school. Worku Jenber currently has grades 9, 10, and 11 and enrolls a total of 420 students (47% of which are girls) from 27 villages in the

general area. The goal has been to add grade 12 and the school required additional books in order to fulfill this goal. The school has a library and a full-time librarian and stocks essential books, which students could check out for a maximum of 1 night. In 2013 based on a proposal from Dr. Adugnaw Dir Biyabir funded the purchase of 389 books. Based on the success and very fast execution of this project, Dir Biyabir was able to accommodate phase 2 of this project and in 2014 we funded the purchase of 602 books including Chemistry, Biology, Math, Physics, Amharic, English, and Geography books. To ensure access to all student these books are kept in the library and are available for checkout. We have received multiple pictures and videos of the book transfer and the Worku Jenber school administration sent a letter of thanks and acknowledgement. We wish these hard working students a bright future.

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C- School Books - Edja Woreda

Yedege Elementary School is the first school in Edja Wereda in what is now called Gurage zone. It was established in 1973 in a collaborative effort between the community and the government, and had grades 1 to 6. It was established to provide children of farmers with access to primary education. In 1997



Yedege students reading their new books.

the school was expanded to include grades 7 and 8 and it currently serves a population of 5,000 to 7,000. There are 1,731 students

enrolled in the school 46% being girls. The school suffered from lack of sufficient books so Dir Biyabir funded the local purchase of over 250 books according to a list provided by the school. This project was implemented through a new partnership with Journey to Light (www.journeytolight.org), a California based non-profit founded by an Ethiopian. Journey to Light has a long history in the community building schools, as well as providing access to clean water, and health services. Dir Biyabir received receipts as well as multiple pictures of the purchased books and the students of Yedege Elementary.

We are happy about the successful completion of this project, and gratified that the eager young students of Yedege Elementary have better access to books. Now that the pilot project has completed successfully, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with Journey to Light in 2015 to provide additional books for schools in the area.

D- School Books - Grace For All Center

We are happy to announce that in 2014 Dir Biyabir entered a new partnership with Grace for All (GFA) to establish a library at their center for homeless kids in Addis Abeba. GFA is an Atlanta-based NGO founded in 1992 by an Ethiopian, and supports homeless kids by providing them meals, paying for their education, supplying them with school materials including uniforms, and giving them a secure and nurturing environment. It currently supports more than 164 children (about half of whom are girls), mostly in Addis Abeba, but it also helps individual children with disabilities in rural areas. The GFA center in Addis is a place where kids come for their daily meals, and it is the only place where they can study and do their homework. GFA was in desperate need of a library to foster an environment that encourages learning and a love for reading, as well as to provide supplemental material for schoolwork, however they did not have the means to



GFA kids enjoying their new library.

set one up. In August 2014, Dir Biyabir provided funding for the purchase of 304 books (Amharic, English, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and children's story books) as well as 50% of the cost of purchasing materials to construct 10 tables and 19 benches for the library. The GFA staff as well as the older kids under the guidance of the founder, constructed all the furniture and completed the library in time for the new school year. The children have been enjoying a functional library since. We are excited by this accomplishment and look forward to collaborating with GFA on more educational projects.

Entrepreneurship

A- Poultry: Sebeta Betedenagil Nunnery

Dir Biyabir sponsored a project with Sebeta Gethesemane Betedenagil Tebabat Nunnery (GBTN) for the first time this year. GBTN was founded in 1960 by the good will of Queen Menen who offered her own palace to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. Currently 105 nuns live in the nunnery taking care of 215 orphan children from all over Ethiopia. The nunnery runs a school and various income generating small enterprises such as:

Vegetable and fruit gardening, handicraft, dairy

farming, bee keeping, and bakery. Based on a proposal submitted by GBTN, Dir Biyabir funded in April, the purchase of an egg hatching incubator. The goal is for the nunnery to generate additional income by hatching eggs and selling chicks. The chair person was privileged to have the opportunity to visit the



Incubator purchased by GBTN

nunnery in April and meet the key Emahoy who is responsible for operations. She was extremely impressed by the level of efficiency, work ethic and effectiveness of these nuns. The nunnery is extremely well run, the children are very well cared for and the quality of the handicraft produced is exemplary. The nunnery should be held up as a model for what can be accomplished in Ethiopia and Dir Biyabir is honored to support them in a small way.

Dir Biyabir received a report with receipts and pictures following the installation of the incubator at the Nunnery. We look forward to supporting similar projects at Sebeta Gethesemane Betedenagil Tebabat Nunnery in the future.

B- Poultry Project for School Girls

In 2014 Dir Biyabir re-initiated the poultry project for school girls in Northern Shewa. We had executed 3 phases of this project with ADHENO but put it on hold due to the challenge of monitoring the project. 3 chicks were provided to 30 school girls in each phase and the scattered location of households made it difficult to quantitatively measure progress. However ADHENO staff in the area reported that eggs (which are extremely expensive) were becoming much more available locally and they reported availability in local village markets, of new varieties of eggs (the source of which could be only the new chicken distributed by ADHENO). In addition, visiting members of Dir Biyabir held discussions with school girls and their teachers on the project and they confirmed the value of the project which has also been giving these girls the opportunity to earn income, manage their finances, and build their self-confidence.

Upon ADHNEO's recommendation Dir Biyabir re-initiated the poultry project for school girls, and in November 2014 wired funding for the purchase of 3 chicks per student for 30 school girls from the village of Moy. These students were selected from the pool of elementary school girls sponsored by Dir Biyabir and were selected based on their school performance. Funding also covers initial commercial feed for 1 month. However, there has been a delay in project implementation due to a new government regulation requiring chicks to be purchased from a local supplier whose chicks are only 1.5 months old and of a breed which ADHENO is not familiar with. Based on experience ADHENO has found that chicks need to be at least 3 months old to survive the cold season. Currently ADHENO has purchased a small number of chicks to evaluate their performance before scaling the project. We will continue to monitor progress on this project, and wish ADHENO and the school girls much success with this project.

Infrastructure

A- Foot Bridge over Beressa River

In April 2014, when the chairperson of Dir Biyabir visited the various project sites in Northern Shewa, the villagers of Amoragedel, Moy, and Kasset repeatedly expressed to their very urgent need for a bridge across the Beressa river. Every rainy season, this river gets very full and several people drown every year trying to cross it. According to the villagers, in just one year 4 members of one family drowned trying to cross the river. The villagers mentioned that in any given year at least 6 people drown trying to cross this river. Since many of the villagers have farms across the river in Weyniye, they have to cross the river to weed, plant and harvest their farms. Based on the requests from the locals which was repeated in village after village throughout the tour of the area, this was clearly a top priority for the villagers. The Dir Biyabir chair committed to the villagers that this issue would be urgently reviewed. ADHENO was very much aware of this issue and expedited the preparation of a proposal including specifications for the foot bridge



Foot bridge over the Beressa river

developed by a local expert. Within a couple of weeks of the return of the Dir Biyabir chairperson to the US, funding was wired for the project in May. Funding covered the purchase of industrial material like concrete and steel, as well as hiring skilled labor to design and construct the bridge. ADHENO managed the project implementation and local villagers eagerly contributed their labor. Together the bridge was

constructed and completed in August 2014 and went into immediate use by the villagers. This foot bridge now connects the kebeles of Moy and Weyniye. In



Inauguration of bridge over the Beressa river

October 2014, working with the community, ADHENO organized an inauguration celebration for the

bridge. There was a very warm celebration attended by local elders and villagers, ADHENO staff, and invited local government officials. A special bread was baked for the occasion and villagers wore T-shirts thanking Dir Biyabir and ADHENO for their support.

This bridge is already making tangible impact in the lives of villagers. It allows them to safely access their farms and benefit economically from this improved access. It also connects the communities of Moy and Weyniye and allows people of these two kebeles to develop closer ties and learn from each other. The construction of this bridge also opens up access to Weyniye so that similar environmental and economic projects can be implemented there. We look forward to the possibility of working with ADHENO and the villagers of Weyniye on integrated environmental rehabilitation and economic empowerment projects that have demonstrated much success in the nearby villages of Amoragedel, Kasset and Moy.

We thank our members for making this critical project a reality!

Dir Biyabir 2014

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014

Revenue		
Membership Fees		6,295.79
Renewal	5,445.79	
New Member	850.00	
Donations from Individuals		7,685.01
Corporate Match		1,700.00
T-shirt Donations		65.00
Donation from Dir Biyabir management team for operations		1,500.00
Revenue Total		17,245.80
Expenses		
Grants Paid Out		54,110.00
TCF Envriornmental Project - ADHENO	30,000.00	
School Sponsorship - ADHENO	6,051.00	
School Books - Worku Jenber School	4,296.00	
School Books - Yedege Elementary School	883.00	
School Books, tables, chairs - GFA Library	1,955.00	
Tables & Chairs for Goshebado School (1 individual donation)	2,000.00	
Incubator for Sebeta Betedenagil Nunnery	2,547.00	
Poultry Project	1,362.00	
Weyniye Bridge Construction	5,016.00	
Operating Expenses		686.86
Taxes	20.00	
Bank/Wire Fees	315.00	
PO Box	119.00	
Web Hosting	92.11	
PayPal Fees	140.75	
Total Expense		54,796.86
Total Revenue Less Total Expense		-37,551.06
Balances		
Ending Balance from 2013		61,397.03
Total 2014 Revenue - Total 2014 Expense		-37,551.06
2014 Ending Balance		23,845.97

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2014

Stated 2014 Goals	Actual 2014 Accomplishment
Successful completion of the Integrated Economic Empowerment and Environmental Rehabilitation project in Northern Shewa and evaluation of project impact.	Project wrapped up successfully in December 2014
Continue supporting school sponsorship program for girls in Northern Shewa.	Continued and expanded school sponsorship with 12 new high school girls added to the program
Support school improvements and providing books for schools in Northern Shewa (Moy Meda, Goshebado and Workegur) based on written requests and proposals.	Funded construction of new classroom block for Amoragedel school as part of TCF project. No proposal received for school books
Fund additional purchases of school books for the Worku Jenber school in Southern Gonder.	Second phase of project successfully completed
Evaluate needs for additional projects in Northern Shewa.	Funded construction of a critical bridge requested by villagers of Moyi and Weyniye in Northern Shewa.
Fund purchase of school books in other areas of Ethiopia (pending new partnerships being finalized)	Funded purchase of books for school in Gurage zone as well as GFA center for homeless kids in Addis Abeba
Recruit additional members.	8 new members recruited in 2014
Keep website more current with project information.	Updated content but new pictures not uploaded yet, also additional content needed- area of opportunity.
Establish more presence on twitter.	Some tweets but need to expand presence on twitter - area of opportunity.

GOALS FOR 2015

- Win new grant from The Christensen Fund to implement Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment project in another kebele in Northern Shewa
- Continue supporting school sponsorship program for girls in Northern Shewa and provide more books for local schools.
- Fund additional purchases of school books in Gurage zone
- Fund additional books or other projects with GFA Center for homeless kids in Addis Abeba
- Strengthen partnership with Nunnery in Sebeta and co-develop a new project
- Recruit additional members.
- Keep website more current with project information.
- Expand presence on Facebook and Twitter

Thank You To Our Members !

Many thanks to all our members: our renewing members for their continued support, and our new members for joining the Dir Biyabir family. Dir Biyabir was created to provide a reliable platform for individuals such as yourselves to easily contribute to tangible positive change in Ethiopia that transforms people's lives. The best way to support the work summarized in this annual report is by continuing to renew your membership and by encouraging friends and family to join Dir Biyabir. For our part, we continue to commit that 100% of your membership fees and donations will be allocated to projects in Ethiopia. Your membership not only allows us to fund more projects, it also gives us the moral support to continue to volunteer our time and effort.



Farmer-priests from Moy kebele

“Dir Biyabir Anbessa Yassir” - when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. Our name is inspired by an Ethiopian proverb that highlights the great strength inherent in people working together. Thank you for being a part of our web.

Wishing you a very happy and successful 2015!
