

S H A R E

 CEDAR FUND 慈運基金會 From Church - Through Church	Suite 504, Rightful Centre, 12 Tak Hing Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong		November - December 2015
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FOCUS ~ MINISTRY

Join Hands Join Heart A 20 years Journey in Ethiopia

Written by: Serena Suen (Programme Officer)

In the past 20 years, Hong Kong was returned to China, experienced the Asian Financial Crisis, overcame SARS, went through the Umbrella Movement and experienced many more events. Across the globe in Ethiopia, its capital city Addis Ababa also came out of a 17-year civil war and survived the notorious famine which took 400,000 lives. As the country gradually moved out of the shadow of famine and achieved the highest economic growth in Africa, a generation of children has grown up as well.

Addis Ababa Geunet Church (AAGC), CEDAR's long term partner in the city, has walked with 559 children and their families in the past 20 years. In January 2015, we conducted a review with AAGC to trace God's grace throughout the years and to seek how we can better serve the children and the community.

A Girl Whose Name Means "Trouble"

Sentayehu Ahmedin is the name of a girl that means "why there are so much trouble". It is beyond one's comprehension why her parents would name their child with such negativity and hopelessness. But after visiting their home, I realised the name quite accurately describes the circumstances the family has been going through.

Sentayehu's father died when she was just a baby. At the age of three, her mother took her to the hospital because she was still

unable to stand and walk by herself. She was diagnosed with severe malnourishment and had to receive immediate therapeutic feeding for six months. Sadly, damages were already done to her mental development and eyesight. Sentayehu joined the AAGC Child Sponsorship Programme ten years ago, she is now 15 years old but is only in Grade seven due to her slowness in learning.



Sentayehu holding Mehret's hand as Sentayehu led us way to her home.

On the day of our visit, Sentayehu greeted us on the main road and we saw how her social worker Mehret was holding her hand when Sentayehu led us down the maze-like alleyways of the slum, inside which her mother and she lives. In the dark damp single-room hut, her mother greeted us on the bed as she had just returned from an eye surgery, the fee being paid from the emergency fund in her Self-help Group (SHG). She shared with us that due to her ill health, she lost her stall in the market where she used to sell grocery to earn a living.

AAGC team demonstrated what it means to be a good neighbour to Sentayehu's family by bringing love and comfort, and mobilising church and community members in the SHG to help Sentayehu's mother in times of need. The family is still struggling to make ends meet, but through the efforts of AAGC, the family is not alone in this life journey.

Sowing Seeds of Faith Among Muslim and Orthodox Christian Children

Although meeting physical needs is important during a person's growing process, what matters most is often the



people who accompany and influence that person. On average, each AAGC Team member has served in the children work for more than 14 years and they have very much become parent-like mentors and crucial Christian role models for many of these children that are growing up in harsh environment.

Children supported by AAGC are all from the poorest of the poor families, some of them are from Orthodox Christian and Muslim families. Through Sunday schools, regular home visits from social workers, social activities and church events, every child and his/her family experience being part of a bigger family. Throughout the years, the team has witnessed children from Muslim and Orthodox Christian families seeing the value of Christian faith and being influenced by it. A Muslim graduate shared with us how blessed she felt to be part of the programme, and that she tried her best to contribute to the society through regular blood donations and serving in an elderly home. Another Muslim graduate also donated children books to the AAGC library and asked the team to invite her to their church's Christmas celebration. A graduate with previous Orthodox Christian background moved to the USA to work as a military dentist and came to accepted Christ there, and when he went back to Addis Ababa to visit his family, he also sought the AAGC team to tell them the good news! Another graduate who moved to Saudi Arabia to work as a maid also came to Christ while working there.

All of these stories come together to make a beautiful tapestry woven with God's love flowing through the AAGC team. Seeds of faith were sowed through the social workers' loving efforts to care for the children holistically and by faithfully living out a true Christian life. When asked what excites the team most, they said it was seeing the children coming to Christ and being able to support their families.

Self-Help Groups – Empowering Families to Help Themselves and Their Community

As Ethiopian society rapidly changes, in 2011 the concept of Self-help Groups (SHGs) was introduced to AAGC by CEDAR in hope of strengthening the capacity of parents and guardians of the sponsored children to improve their family situation, and walk out of poverty in the long run. SHG is a sustainable approach that encourages its members to manage their resources, however limited, by learning how to cut cost and save money collectively. The group will build up a resource pool from which members can take a low interest loan for income generating activities to improve their living. Since 2011, we have over 250 members in 12 SHGs.

Mehret's mother has just given birth to a second child and finds it hard to work outside the home. So she recently took a loan from her SHG to start a small grocery shop on a steep slope where her tin-sheet home is also located. She shared with us how she hopes to bless her family and her community with this small shop as people no longer need to walk a long way to buy grocery.



Apart from pooling in resources, SHGs also empower individuals by offering a platform for them to receive training, engage in decision-making processes, exchange good business ideas and even parental issues!

Yidenakachew's grandmother has to help her two struggling daughters to raise four children. She was able to take loans from her SHG to start a small business selling the local delicacy - Injera on the streets. She can now provide for her grandchildren but her concern now is how to raise them to follow God's way and she asked us to pray for her in this long journey.

Teaching the children to follow God's way is a common concern shared by many SHG members. The SHGs offer much needed support to parents and guardians as they can share parental tips and even exert pressure on the local council to put up street lights in their slums to safeguard their daughters' safety when they return late from school. Through SHGs, we can witness that when people come together, the capacity to transform individuals, families, communities is much greater.

Entering the 21st Year...

God has entrusted us with 165 children as we step into the 21st year. It is our sincere hope that we can work with AAGC to better care for these children.

A Nigerian proverb says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." In the urban village, with its rapid development, inflation caused by economic development, high rent and new challenges for vulnerable families, we believe it requires a lot of unity and cooperation within the church community to raise these 165 children and many more others entrusted to AAGC. In the upcoming years, we hope to mobilise more people to be involved in the process, such as those graduates over the past 20 years are indeed great living stories to encourage the children. We hope to see more graduates being mobilised and be willing to take up the baton to become role models for their younger counterparts.

It is our hope to see these 165 children and their families to be able to thrive physically and spiritually, and this definitely takes more than the effort of the AAGC team. This involves the wider church community and also us here in Hong Kong, through prayers, offering, or even sharing parental tips or business ideas!



The next generation

STEP INTO THE WORLD



Restoring Women's Self-worth and Dignity by Breaking Cultural Vices

Breaking cultural vices needs constant intervention and promotion to achieve results. CEDAR's partner in Ethiopia, Kale Heywet Church Development Commission (EKHC-DC), fights against the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Although FGM is banned, the traditional thinking and practice of genital mutilation as a means of ensuring chastity is deep-rooted. EKHC-DC therefore actively educates the public on the harmfulness of FGM through promotional events and workshops, and organises "combat groups" and 'public awareness ambassadors' to fight against FGM.

Over the past year, EKHC-DC has reached out to 20,165 males and 21,162 females through events at schools and churches. It also formed 40 "combat groups" to spread the anti-FGM message in the community. As a result, some people stopped practising FGM, with some even becoming ambassadors to encourage parents and young girls to refuse FGM.

- **HK\$500** can offer occupational training to 10 former FGM practitioners
- **HK\$700** can help to train 10 community health workers and/or 'FGM Ambassadors'
- **HK\$2,000** can organize one big community event to promote cessation of cultural vices such as FGM

Please support EKHC-DC in its fight against FGM, so that Ethiopian women may live with self-worth and dignity.

JOIN HANDS JOIN HEARTS



Serving HIV/AIDS Orphans with Zimbabwean Churches

Zimbabwe is infamous for its hyperinflation. In 2008, the country had an inflation rate of billions percent. High inflation, unemployment and high prevalence of AIDS all contribute to the country's poverty.

Many children there are orphaned at a young age as a result of losing one or both of their parents to AIDS. CEDAR's partner in Zimbabwe, Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT), has over the years collaborated with local churches to look after AIDS orphans and families. Our conversation with Rev. Never Femayi who is involved with FACT's ministry, helps us to learn more about the work among the children living on the margins of society.

How long have you been with FACT? What led you to this children ministry?

NF: I have joined the ministry for five years already. FACT and our church share similar goals to serve needy children. FACT ministers mainly to HIV-infected people, and we hope that through collaboration we may provide spiritual support to children affected by AIDS.

How does your church support the disadvantaged children in Zimbabwe?

NF: Our church provides spiritual support to disadvantaged children and teaches them life skills so that they can look after themselves and children of similar circumstances.

What changes do you hope to see in the children?

NF: Hope For Life supports HIV-infected youths; through life education we help youngsters learn to face life positively, accept their condition and make wise planning and decision for their future. We hope to improve their lives in different aspects, including education, health and social welfare.

Do you see hope in the children or the ministry?

NF: Our hope stems from seeing the children's potentials. As a church, we serve the children so that they will see their lives' value and meaning, and be edified to utilise their God-given potentials and talents.

What are your wishes towards the children or the ministry?

NF: We desire that the children will receive Christ and live victoriously, that they will persist in their antiretroviral therapy, and share their knowledge with fellow patients, so that more children will receive support from the community. ►

TAKING ACTION



A Move for Fair-trade in Africa

Written by: Sara

Loathing for unfair trading

People often think of Africa's poverty and unending problems. Colonial aggression severely exploited African lives and natural resources, African raw materials such as cotton, coffee and cocoa beans were bought way below market price by European countries but resold worldwide as high-end products after further processing. European traders made the maximum profit while African farmers remained destitute and exposed to the risk of losing everything if disaster strikes. Isn't it ironic that many such farmers never tasted the coffee or chocolate they grew because they could not afford it?

Sick and tired of charity

Many African countries became independent in the 1960s, but politically they are either ruled by dictators or troubled by ethnic power struggles which damage their economies. This coupled with underdeveloped infrastructures greatly stifle their economic development. Although international charitable funding helps Africa meet urgent needs, a deeper (and invisible) level of problems is formed, such as a weakling mentality, irresponsibility or dependence, and dying entrepreneurial intentions. Africa's general economy is stagnant and many countries are in great debt, making poverty eradication seems impossible.

Yearning for fair-trading

In recent years, many in Africa have cried out, "We are tired of charity! Give us fair-trading!" Nowadays Sino-African trade is going strong and Africans greatly welcome China exchanging infrastructure projects for African natural resources. When I heard their cry, I co-started a company in Hong Kong two years ago called SAWA Africa which buys products directly from the producers, maximising profits for them and their workers. We import quality products from East Africa, such as organic unrefined shea butter from Uganda and fair-trade ceramic accessories from Kenya. As our company grows, we create employment opportunities for the African people and with steady employment they will depend less on charity.

A "love to the end" mission

That is how SAWA Africa tries to work for the African people. God planted in me a love for them for over a decade when I started volunteer work in Africa in their times of disaster, famine or terrorist attacks. Now with our socially responsible business we are helping the Africans in a way they feel respected. We pray that this will be a sustainable ministry, not to maximise profits but love to the end.

The writer is the founder of SAWA Africa, and through the fair-trade platform sells African products and creates employment opportunity for the African people.

DONATION & PARTNERSHIP

CEDAR would like to appeal to churches and Christians for regular donations so that CEDAR can continue to support ongoing projects.

Direct deposit> HSBC 600-385678-001

Cheque> Payable to 'CEDAR FUND'

Autopay> <http://cedarfundeng.wordpress.com/donations/>

Online donation> <http://bit.ly/cedar-online-donation-eng>

OPERATING STATEMENT

		Jul - Sep 15	
Income	Donations	HK\$	2,231,247
	Grants		-
	Appeal for Relief		1,861,087
	Other Income		35,683
		HK\$	4,128,017
Expenditure	Projects	Asia	1,091,813
		China	969,871
		Africa	781,258
	Relief Projects		1,069,008
	Education Ministry		399,543
	Administration		303,880
		HK\$	4,615,373
Surplus/(Deficit)		*HK\$	(487,356)

Please visit our website for a detailed financial statement.
Budget for October 2015 to June 2016 is HKD12,236,027.
Please remember the needs of CEDAR and partner, through prayers and donation, to ensure all the project to be implemented. 🙏