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Dir Biyabir 2015 Annual Report

www.dirbiyabir.org

March 13, 2016 revised April 20, 2016

OVERVIEW

As we welcome 2016, we note with gratitude that in 2015 we won a large grant from The Christensen Fund AND it was a record year in terms of membership. We had 72 members in 2015, our highest level yet! 100% of membership fees directly fund a project in Ethiopia so the more members we have the more projects we can fund. Our strength is in our numbers, thus our name “Dir Biyabir” which means “when spider webs unite”, inspired by the popular Ethiopian Proverb “Dir Biyabir Anbessa Yassir” i.e. “When spider Webs Unite, They Can Tie Up a Lion”. Many thanks to our renewing members for continuing their support and to our new members for joining our web!

One challenge we continue to face is late renewal of membership. Membership is annual and can be



Weyniye

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, ideally by June of each year. We continue to have a lot of renewals late in the year in October-December and this consumes our scarce resources in sending out renewal reminder emails. We have implemented a new **auto-renewal option via Paypal** so if you select this option, PayPal will automatically send us your membership dues at the same time every year. We strongly urge you to consider this

new **PayPal Auto-Renew feature** on our website: <http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member>

Our projects in 2015 focused on 2 areas: Education and our Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment Initiative. On the Education front we continued to expand our school books program in the Gurage Zone, we also continued to fund our School Girl Sponsorship program in Northern Shewa. Our Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment Initiative continues to be our largest program and in May of 2015 we received a generous grant of \$80,000 from The Christensen Fund to expand this project into the kebele of Weyniye in Northern Shewa. Many many thanks to TCF for their continued generous support of this initiative!

2015 was also the first year where Dir Biyabir organized a fundraiser in the “real” world as opposed to an email campaign. We held 2 successful fundraisers and details are available in this report.

Leadership Team

There were no changes to the Dir Biyabir Executive Team in 2015: Chairperson - Haeran Fisseha, Secretary - Aida Abate, Treasurer - Ksenia Siegel. We assembled a new Board in 2015: Dr. Tadesse Wolde, Sam Smith, and Dr. Asrat Tesfayesus. All Dir Biyabir positions are voluntary and uncompensated. The Executive team continues 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

Starting January 1 2015, the Dir Biyabir membership levels were adjusted as follows

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

This is the first time that membership fees are being adjusted since our founding in 2007. It was a much needed adjustment given the escalation of cost in Ethiopia.

Total membership in 2015 was 72, up by 14% from our 2014 membership level of 63. Of the 72 members in 2015, 49 were renewing members from 2014, 8 were re-activating lapsed membership from 2013 or earlier, and 15 were brand new members. The 2015 Membership total of 72 members breaks down as follows:

- 79% Renewing or reactivating members
- 21% New Members

New Auto-Renewal Option

By popular request we have implemented a new auto-renewal option via PayPal. If you select this option, PayPal will automatically send us your membership payment once a year at the same time of the year. This means you will no longer need to worry about sending your membership fees as PayPal will take care of this for you. A few of you have already signed up for this option and we encourage the rest of you to do the same by going to our membership page at <http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member>

Once you sign up for auto-renewal, we will remove your name from our reminder email list.

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>



Traditional House in Gurage Zone

PROJECT STATUS

In May of 2015 we were very fortunate to win a grant of \$80,000 from the San Francisco based Christensen Fund (TCF). This grant enabled us to kick off phase 4 of our Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment project in Weyniye kebele in June 2015. Like all prior phases of this project, phase 4 is also implemented via our partner ADHENO. We had reported that in August 2014 construction was completed on a Dir Biyabir funded bridge across the Beressa River connecting the villages of Moy and Weyniye. This bridge facilitates contact between Moy where phase 3 of this project was implemented and Weyniye where phase 4 has started. On the Education front, Dir Biyabir continued expanding its very successful school books program by covering more schools in the Gurage zone. Dir Biyabir also continued support for the school girl support program in Northern Shewa. Details on each project are summarized below.

Integrated Economic Empowerment and Environmental Rehabilitation

On December 31, 2014, Dir Biyabir and our implementation partner ADHENO wrapped up phase 3 of our largest project, “Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment project”. This was a 2 year projects in Moy kebele,



Carrot seeds funded by Dir Biyabir via TCF grant

Bassona Worana Woreda of Northern Shewa. In June of 2015, a similar 2-year project was initiated in the neighboring kebele of Weyniye with an \$80,000 grant from TCF. Similar to prior phases, the goal of phase 4 of this project is economic empowerment and enabling the community to improve its livelihood while

nurturing and protecting the unique environmental and cultural heritage and biodiversity of this region of the Central Ethiopian Highlands. Weyniye is one of the rural kebeles of Basona Worana Woreda, with a population of 2,528 of which 51% are women.

The key goals of this project are:

- 1) Environmental rehabilitation and biodiversity protection by planting and nurturing 200,000 indigenous trees and traditional medicinal plants
- 2) Improved agricultural yields through development of 4 km of irrigation canals
- 3) Develop local horticulture by providing farmers with seedlings for fruit trees and seeds for vegetables
- 4) Access to clean drinking water through construction of one water spring
- 5) Revenue generation for women by supporting traditional self help groups (Idir), involved in producing pottery, traditional foods and spices, production and sale of traditional textiles etc
- 6) Improved access to market by upgrading current 5 km foot-path
- 7) Reduce migration of rural youth to cities by providing opportunity to earn income from traditional bee keeping, sheep fattening, vegetable production etc
- 8) Preserving traditional knowledge by documenting usage of traditional medicines and other disappearing cultural practices

Education Initiatives

A- School Sponsorship- Northern Shewa

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 2014 Dir Biyabir had sponsored 139 elementary school girls and 28 secondary school girls.

In 2015 Dir Biyabir continued support for the 139 elementary school girls and 28 high school girls. Our goal is to ensure that bright motivated rural girls are not forced to stop their education due to lack of funds. Thus Dir Biyabir works with our local partner ADHENO to identify such girls and we sponsor them by covering the cost of their rent, stationary, uniforms, reference books, toiletries and an evening tutor. Sponsored girls are expected to also teach reading and writing as well as social issues to women in their villagers when they return to their homes over the summer break, and they are given a small stipend for this community service. The cost of this program in 2015 was \$131 per student per year plus \$26 as ADHENO administrative cost for managing the program, for a total \$157 per student per year. For elementary students the program simply covers the cost of stationary for \$10 per year with \$2 administrative cost for a total of \$12 per student per year. These modest sums can change a girl's life so many thanks to all our supporters!

B- School Books - Gurage Zone

In 2014 Dir Biyabir had funded the purchase of school books for Yedege Elementary in the Gurage Zone. In 2015 Dir Biyabir funded the purchase of books for three more schools in the Edja Wereda of the Gurage Zone: Anano Elementary, Bojebar Elementary, and Negoder Elementary schools. The project was to be implemented via our partner Journey to Light (JTL). Anano has a total

enrollment of 1,225, with 50.53% being girls. Bojebar has a total enrollment of 1,198, with 47.6% being girls. Negoder has a total enrollment of 476, with 52.5% being girls (all enrollment numbers are from 2014). The purchase includes 362 books for Anano, 370 books for Bojebar, and 207 books for Negoder. In addition the JTL representative showed his



Books purchased for Negoder Elementary

commitment by finding free transportation and using \$200 allocated for book transportation to purchase 67 more books for Negoder bringing the total to 1,006 books purchased.

In November 2015, our Chairperson went to visit a total of 9 schools in the Gurage Zone, including the 4 schools where we funded books, as part of a self-funded trip to Ethiopia. She talked to the students and teachers about the impact of the books and visited the school libraries to see the purchased books. At Bojebar School teachers said that prior to the books being purchased, 20-30 students failed the 8th grade Ministry Exam every year. After the books this has gone down to 2-3 failing students per year, a 90% improvement and a huge win! Based on the success of this program we decided to fund book purchases at two additional schools in the Cheha Wereda of the Gurage zone. We wish much success to these bright and eager kids.

ACTIVITIES

In 2015 Dir Biyabir held two fundraising activities. Though we had organized on-line fundraising events in the past, this was the first time Dir Biyabir organized fundraising efforts in the “real world”. The events were very successful in introducing our organization to a wider audience and also in raising additional funds. We recruited 15 new members in 2015, our highest level in the last 6 years and this is largely due to the publicity we got from our fundraisers. We thank all of you who attended and supported us at these events!

August Fundraiser at Dana Cafe

On August 8 we held our very first fundraiser at Dana Street Roasting Company in Mountain View. This cafe has been serving as our unofficial headquarters for almost 10 years! It was a successful event and we raised \$2,065.20*. Our Chairperson gave a brief presentation on Dir Biyabir and showed a short film about our work in Northern Shewa. We have made this film available for you on Vimeo at:

<https://vimeo.com/135418030> (Password is DBfilm2ET). We had good attendance and got some exposure, especially in the local community of the Northern California Bay Area, and we are starting to



Fundraiser at Dana Cafe

attract interest from some new members, which is very exciting for us!

October 5K Run in Palo Alto

On October 18 we held our second fundraiser which was a 5K run in the beautiful Palo Alto Baylands



At the Start Line of the 5K Run

here in the Bay Area. The goal was to raise funds for our school sponsorship program. The run was held on well-maintained roads and wide dirt trails extending out into the bay. This event was very well attended and we were able to net \$6,186.17* to fund our School Girl Sponsorship program. We thank all of you who supported us by attending the run or sending a donation. You made this event successful!

** Figures revised on April 20, 2016 to correct reporting error*

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2015

Revenue		
Membership Fees		16,853.48
Renewal	15,253.48	
New Member	1,600.00	
Donations from Individuals		6,660.00
August Fundraiser		2,065.25
October Fundraiser		6,186.17
Corporate Match		4,804.94
The Christensen Fund		50,000.00
T-shirt Donations		40.00
Donation from Dir Biyabir management team for operations		1,000.00
Revenue Total		87,609.84
Expenses		
Grants Paid Out		53,061.00
TCF Environmental Project - ADHENO	44,050	
JTL School Books Project in Gurage Zone- Phase 2	3,200	
School Sponsorship Project - ADHENO	5,811	
Operating Expenses		1,747.93
Bank/Wire Fees	195.00	
PO Box	82.00	
Website Design Enhancements	149.00	
August Fundraiser Expenses	448.90	
October Fundraiser Expenses	411.00	
Web Hosting	150.85	
PayPal Fees	310.19	
Total Expense		54,808.93
Total Revenue Less Total Expense		32,800.91
Balances		
Ending Balance from 2014		23,845.97
Total 2015 Revenue - Total 2015 Expense		32,800.91
2015 Ending Balance		56,646.88

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2015

Stated 2015 Goals	Actual 2015 Accomplishment
Win new grant from The Christensen Fund to implement Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment project in another kebele in Northern Shewa	Won a grant of \$80,000 from The Christensen Fund, and started implementation of Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment in Weyniye Kebele in June 2015
Continue supporting school sponsorship program for girls in Northern Shewa and provide more books for local schools.	School sponsorship program continued in 2015. No books provided for Northern Shewa as book list was not received
Fund additional purchases of school books in Gurage zone	Second phase of project successfully completed with purchase of books for 3 additional schools in Gurage Zone
Fund additional books or other projects with Grace For All Center for homeless kids in Addis Abeba	No proposals received from Grace For All, no projects in 2015
Strengthen partnership with Nunnery in Sebeta and co-develop a new project	No projects with Nunnery in 2015
Recruit additional members.	15 new members recruited in 2015
Keep website more current with project information.	Significant update to website in 2015 with project information and pictures
Expand presence on Facebook and Twitter	Leveraged Facebook and Twitter to publicize fundraising events. However Facebook and Twitter continue to be area of opportunity.

GOALS FOR 2016

- Given current drought in Ethiopia, focus on food security issues:
 - Short term: hold fundraising and support drought relief efforts in Northern Shewa
 - Long term: develop proposals and win new grants to fund additional Environmental Rehabilitation and Economic Empowerment projects that improve food security
 - Visit Dir Biyabir sponsored projects and identify new effective projects with existing partners
 - Expand School Girl Sponsorship Program, add annual updates
 - Identify new project partners in Ethiopia with proven backgrounds in grass-roots projects
 - Develop training for ADHENO staff on grant writing, communication, etc
 - Recruit more members
 - Identify new funding partners for Dir Biyabir
 - Hold Dir Biyabir Fundraiser in US
 - Improve social media presence including Facebook and Twitter
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Thank You To Our Members !

Many thanks to all our members. 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. If you like what we do, the best way to support us 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.** The more members we have the more projects we can fund, and the more we are encouraged by your support



Students at Yedege Elementary

“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. The more members we have, the stronger our web.

Thank you for being a part of our web. Wishing you and yours a very happy and successful 2016!