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Dir Biyabir 2024 Annual Report

February 4, 2025

OVERVIEW

Message From The Chairperson

In 2024 Dir Biyabir had to continue focusing on emergency aid in the N.Shewa area of the Amhara region due to the continued military conflict in the region, as well as the presence of thousands of displaced Amhara civilians fleeing targeted violence in the Oromia region. N. Shewa has been a focus area for Dir Biyabir since our founding in 2007. However our core mission of investing in people and their environment so they can sustainably lift themselves out of poverty has had to be mostly put on hold for yet another year due to the continued critical need for emergency aid.

Despite the continued tragic war in the Amhara region and the significant disruption of the education system there (millions of children have been unable to attend school in the region for the last 2 years), we are gratified that in 2024 we were able to continue and even expand our 2 education programs.

In 2024 we continued our school sponsorship program. Please read the remarkable story of one of our students, **Mulu (page 4).** It shows how much tragedy our kids face and the incredible resilience they develop at a very young age.

We also expanded our university scholarship program that was kicked off in 2022 to include the top 12 highest achieving graduating high-school seniors (up from 7) in the N.Shewa region. Starting in 2024, every year we sponsor the top 6 boys and the tops 6 girls based on their scores on the national 12th grade exam. In addition to these 2 programs, a new project was started to cover the thousands of displaced Amhara kids (including hundred of orphans), who were violently displaced from the Oromia region and are missing out on any education. Mezemir Girma, a lecturer from Debre Birhan University who had founded a community library, the Ras Abebe Aregay Library, had started a program where he and some volunteers were tutoring the kids at the library and feeding them a warm meal. We are proud that we were able to support his wonderful work with children. Sadly in yet another tragic demonstration that "no good deed shall go unpunished" the Ras Abebe Aregay Library was demolished in November 2024, to make way for wider sidewalks.

IDP Kids at Ras Abebe Aregay Libray

In the face of such extreme challenges we pray for strength and endurance especially for those most impacted on the ground in Ethiopia. We are grateful to our dedicated and competent local partner in Ethiopia, ADHENO for flawlessly implementing our projects on the ground and enabling us to make an impact on thousands of disenfranchised Ethiopians. And of course this impact is only possible due to the generous support of members and donors like you, so thank you!

We pray and hope that 2025 will be the year that all guns are silenced in Ethiopia and indeed all over the world. May we all see justice, peace, and the rebuilding of lives in 2025.

Leadership Team

In 2024 our Treasurer Yared Mengistu transitioned to Board Member. We are excited to welcome Charlie Colosky as our new Treasurer. Please join us in welcoming Charlie to the Dir Biyabir team!

- Chairperson - Haeran Fisseha
- Secretary - Eminet Ayele
- Treasurer - Charlie Colosky

In 2024 the Board consisted of: Dr. Tadesse Wolde, Sam Smith, and Yared Mengistu. We thank Yared for his diligent service as Treasurer and welcome his continued support as a board member.

As always, all Dir Biyabir positions are voluntary and uncompensated. The executive team continues to cover all of Dir Biyabir operational expenses, to ensure that **100% of membership fees and donations received are directly utilized to fund**

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is simply a mechanism to raise funds for our projects in Ethiopia via membership fees. Membership fees are our only reliable and consistent source of revenue to fund projects in Ethiopia. As always 100% of membership fees and donations are allocated to fund one of our grassroots projects in Ethiopia. You are of course very welcome to pay any amount beyond the levels stated below.

- Diamond: $1,000 per year
- Platinum: $500 per year
- Gold: $250 per year

Membership is **annual** and can be renewed simply by paying membership fees any time within the calendar year. Members are strongly encouraged to renew their membership as early in the year as possible.. There are no additional responsibilities or benefits for being a member.

Membership fees are treated like donations, and like all other donations, **are 100% tax deductible and eligible for corporate match programs.** So please do check with your employer if they have such a program and request a match for your membership fee payments and all your donations.

We highly encourage our members to use our **PayPal Subscribe feature** on our website: http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member . This way your membership will auto-renew every year and you won't need to remember to renew your membership. This also frees up our scarce volunteer resources to focus on project execution rather than reminding members to renew, so we highly appreciate all auto-renewals!

New or Renewing Membership can also be paid by:

1) By Zelle (dirbiyabir@gmail.com)

2) Sending a check payable to Dir Biyabir (please include your **email address** for receipts) to:

   Dir Biyabir
   PO Box 914,
   Mountain View, CA 94042

3) One-time payment via PayPal

http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member

PROJECT STATUS

Emergency Food Relief for Displaced Amhara Civilians

In February 2022 Dir Biyabir had raised funds to provide emergency relief for Amhara civilians, from the Oromia region fleeing endless rounds of horrific terror attacks by Oromo extremists simply because of their Amhara identity. Over 30,000 of these internally displaced people (IDP) had moved to the N.Shewa region, and of these about 9,000 were settled in the town of Debre Birhan.

In July 2023, about 4,000 of these IDP were required to move out of the city of Debre Birhan to a camp in a rural area 10 kilometers north of Debre Birhan known as Bakelo. These IDP were facing a dire predicament with no food supply in their camps and no government or aid agency willing to help them.

In November 2023, the program officer from our local partner ADHENO visited the IDP at Bakelo to understand first hand what their critical needs are. Based on this assessment, Dir Biyabir ran an emergency fundraiser from December 2023 to February 2024.

In January - February of 2024 Dir Biyabir funded the purchase and distribution of emergency food and other supplies for the entire Bakelo camp where over 4,674 Amhara civilians (1,219 families) displaced from Wellega were sheltered under terrible conditions. All material was purchased based on feedback from the IDP on their critical needs. For example the IDP were very clear that their highest priority was to get teff flour as opposed to bleached wheat flour which they said they can not make into injera. Since teff is expensive they advised us to get corn flour to mix it with. For protein we added beans to make traditional "shiro" sauce. They also emphasized the need for mattresses and blankets to protect against the biting cold of the Debre Birhan area (located at over 9,000 feet above sea level). Though there is an education center in the camp (with 500+ kids), the center had no books or stationary. Since text books are not available even in Debre Birhan, Dir Biyabir funded the printing and binding of textbooks (from soft copies of the books), as well as stationary. Several balls were also purchased and distributed so the kids who have been heavily traumatized by violence at the hands of Oromo extremists, can get some relief through play time.

Emergency Food Delivery to Bakelo

All items were purchased and delivered by our local partner ADHENO. Food items were delivered in January 2024, bedding and educational material were delivered in several phases in February to March 2024:

Food: 27,400 kgs Teff grain, 1,1400 kgs corn flour, 9,200 kg raw beans

Bedding: 120 mattresses, 120 blankets, 120 mattress covers (to protect against rain)

Educational Material: 296 text books (printed from pdf), 10 posters of alphabets and numbers, 14 balls

Please **click on the video below** for details of this delivery of emergency aid

School Sponsorship - N.Shewa

The school sponsorship program was proposed by our local partner ADHENO to sponsor the education of girls in seven kebeles in Bassona Worana Wereda in Northern Shewa. ADHENO identified that there were 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, and the sponsorship program has continued ever since.

2024 continued to be yet another challenging year for all students in the Amhara region. Many schools are still closed due to active military conflict, and civilian infrastructure including schools, homes, churches and hospitals have been significantly damaged by drone attacks.

In these traumatizing times, it is especially critical that we continue to support these kids so they do not feel abandoned in their time of greatest need.

The elementary school sponsorship program is a basic program whereby school supplies are purchased for 150 (up from 139) elementary school kids whose families can not afford to buy this material. The high school sponsorship program covers the cost of rent (as high schools are far from home) as well as school supplies and basic necessities. Dir Biyabir sponsorship starts at 9th grade and covers all of high school, then continues to the end of university or college/technical training for each sponsored girl that continues her education. All sponsored students are girls from families who can not fund their education.

Thus far of the high school students we sponsored, 11 have graduated from technical college and 6 have graduated from university. We currently have 4 students still in their university program.

We are featuring one of our students who has a remarkable story of resilience in the face of tragedy.

Mulu's Story

Mulu (name changed for privacy) was born in the wereda (district) of Bassona Worana. While she was still an infant her father gave her to her grandparents to raise. Her father then passed away while Mulu was still a small child. Mulu was an eager and bright student. Tragically When she was 13 years old, she was raped and got pregnant. She gave birth when she was 14 years old and a 6th grade student. Mulu's mother is alive but has not seen Mulu since she was a small child.

Due to her challenging situation, the Bassona Worana District Women and Children Affairs Office introduced her to our local partner ADHENO. Thus Mulu entered Dir Biyabir's school sponsorship program in 2015 and she has continued in this program ever since. Several years ago Mulu moved to Debre-Birhan to live with her aunt . When Mulu entered university under our sponsorship program, her aunt took care of Mulu's daughter while Mulu went off to her assigned university far from Debre Birhan.

Mulu was a 4th year student in Marketing Management when tragedy hit again. Her aunt, who had been caring for her daughter passed away. This was a huge and personal loss for Mulu but she had to start strong. She transferred to Debre-Birhan University to be close to her daughter and decided to live off campus in a rented house so she could be with her child. Mulu's daughter is now twelve years old and in sixth grade. Mulu had to start working in a teahouse to support herself and her daughter. When Dir Biyabir heard about Mulu's situation in September 2024, we promptly sent extra funds via ADHENO to ensure she would not need to work and can focus on her daughter and her studies.

Mulu has written a letter to thank Dir Biyabir for the support over many years. We will continue to monitor this remarkable young woman and pray for her continued resilience.

Nutrition, Education & Micro-Enterprise for Displaced Amhara Kids

The founder or the Ras Abebe Aregay Library in Debre Birhan, Mezemir Girma, had taken it upon himself to provide various services to displaced Amhara kids residing in various camps in Debre Birhan. These are kids who have suffered horrible trauma as they fled extreme violence at the hands of Oromo extremist terrorists who were killing people just for their Amhara identity. A 13 week program kicked off on April 13, 2024 funded by Dir Biyabir.

This 13 week program provided the following for over 50 IDP kids at Ras Abebe Aregay Library:

- Warm healthy lunch of vegan Ethiopian food
- Purchase 400 stuffed toys that the kids make (toys to be distributed to small kids at the Bakelo IDP camp). Kids will use the money they earn for stationary and other necessities
- Shoe shine ("listro") equipment for 20-30 kids who want to work and earn extra income
- b) In July - August 2024 Dir Biyabir funded another 6 week program through ADHENO, for the "Kiremt" ie summer season when school is closed.

Please **click on the video below** for details

The Kiremt (rainy season) program was held for 40 kids and lasted for 6 weeks and occurred during the time when schools are shut down for the summer break. This 6 week program included:

- Breakfast for all kids 3 days a week
- Tutoring in Amharic writing, English, Math, and Computer Skills for all kids.
- The kids who had been writing their personal stories of their horrific experiences in Wellega in an earlier program at the library, re-wrote their stories with improved hand-writing as part of the Kiremt program. With the improved hand-writing Mezemir was able to read and translate some of their stories which he has posted on his blog at https://mezemirethiopia.blogspot.com/2024/10/ so others can hear their tragic story.
- Blankets were purchased for all kids to keep them warm in the cold and wet Kiremt weather
- School uniforms were purchased for 28 kids (the rest had received uniforms last year)
- Stationary including exercise books, pens, pencils, and erasers were purchased for 54 kids (40 kids from the summer program plus 14 kids who came from the Bakelo camp)
- A visit was organized for the kids on July 15 to the Debre Birhan Seedling Station which is run by ADHENO at the local College of Teacher Education campus. The ADHENO seedling station manager provided a guided tour for the kids
- At the end of the Kiremt program, there was a 2 week break followed by a closing program on September 8 2024 where they all celebrated International Literacy Day at the library with members of the community & guests

Lunch at Ras Abebe Aregay Library

Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro College Scholarship Program

The "Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro" (ie N.Shewa Bright Minds) Scholarship Program is the brainchild of a longtime Dir Biyabir member and generous supporter. This donor provides most of the funding for this scholarship program. With additional funding from another donor, we are happy to report that in 2024 we expanded our support to the top 12 graduating high-school seniors (up from 7 the last 2 years). This means that the top 6 boys and the top 6 girls in N. Shewa (based on their scores on the national 12th grade exam) will be awarded this scholarship **every year.** The award ceremony for students and their families for the 2024/2025 school year had to be pushed out to February 2025.

This scholarship program is implemented and managed by our long-time partner in Ethiopia, ADHENO. The goal of this program is to support the top students in N.Shewa (whose families are mostly poor farmers) and ensure they get all the resources they need to succeed in their studies. Though public university tuition is free in Ethiopia, there are many expenses that make it very challenging for kids from poorer backgrounds to succeed.

The biggest grant to the students is that they each receive a brand new laptop computer (in their second year). In addition, this scholarship provides all the upfront material that students are required to bring when they first enter university including: bedding items, sportswear, luggage, and transportation. In addition they are given a generous monthly stipend that covers all essential items for the students including reference books, photo copying expenses, and toiletries. The monthly stipend continues for all 5 years until the students graduate.

In recent years, only a tiny percentage of students taking the 12th grade national exam even get a passing grade. In fact in 2022 and 2023 a shocking 3% of students tested nationally were able to even pass this exam. Though this is a clear indication of the dismal state of education in the country, it makes it even more remarkable that there are kids in highly deprived rural areas who not only pass but achieve high results. This makes it even more critical that we support such gifted and highly motivated kids as they will be the engine that drives the country forward.

Signage from last year's award ceremony

Some very encouraging results we have already seen in the 2 years this scholarship program has existed:

- Awardees say they are highly encouraged and motivated by receiving the scholarship
- Awardees are getting outstanding results in challenging areas of study including medicine and engineering
- Awardees report that they are helping each other and forming support groups in universities that are far from home and family
- High Schools in N.Shewa are promoting this scholarship program as an incentive for students, and students are more driven to achieve in high school so they may win this scholarship

We are already thinking ahead regarding the prospects these kids have once they graduate from university. Dir Biyabir would like to ensure these brilliant kids are set up for success whether it is setting up their own business or having the basics so they can interview and get a job. This requires funding, so if you are interested in supporting these smart and committed kids please do let us know so we can start setting aside some funding for their future.

Micro-Enterprise for Displaced Amhara Civilians

The IDP at Bakelo, as is the case with most of the displaced Amhara civilians from the Wellega region, are farmers and artisans and in addition to the physical deprivation of living in these camps with no reliable access to food, it has been very difficult for their psyche to sit around the camp and wait for aid as they are used to working hard and have many skills. Thus Dir Biyabir partnered with ADHENO to launch 2 phases of entrepreneurship projects for the displaced folks in the Bakelo camp. The goal is to enable these innocent folks to use their skills to produce goods that they can sell and generate income for themselves and their families.

Please **click on the video below** for details:

Phase 1 (February - March 2024)

Phase 1 included the purchase and distribution of the following handicraft material:

- basket weaving material for 360 women
- 200 women received sebez (hard dry grass) and sindedo (soft dry grass)
- 160 women received sebez (hard dry grass) and madaberya (colorful plastic material)
- cotton and spindle for spinning for 60 women
- crochet needles and thread for 20 women
- traditional weaving looms for 15 men

The beauty of this project is that some of these activities support each other. The cotton spun by the women is then supplied to the weavers who make it into beautiful gabis (traditional Ethiopian cotton blankets) that are always in high demand.

Woman with cotton & spindle at Bakelo

Phase 2 (June 2024):

- June 4 to 6, 2024: 3 day entrepreneurship training given to 26 women and 8 men (34 total)
- Material and startup capital given to the 34 training participants based on their expressed interest:
- 15,000 birr (260 USD) deposited in bank account for each of 25 women after they completed their training
- 9 sewing machines purchased and distributed for 1 woman and 8 men

As you can see from the video this brought much relief and joy to these wonderful folks, as they have the satisfaction of putting themselves to good use and have a means to generate some income. It is so gratifying to see the Bakelo IDP camp abuzz with activity with women spinning cotton, and weaving traditional baskets and men weaving traditional cotton blankets (Gabi). In the videos you can see them all, Christian and Muslim alike, sending Dir Biyabir donors their profuse blessings for remembering them in their time of need.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024

Revenue		
Membership Fees		25,753.75
General Donations from Individuals		1,036.53
Donation for Partner Operating Expense Support		5,865.00
Relief for Amhara IDP from Wellega Fundraiser		30,142.79
Donations for N.Shewa Biruh Aemro Scholarship		30,000.00
Year-end Fundraiser		9,499.78
Total micro-grants (Corporate Volunteer Hour Match, Amazon Smile, United Way, PayPal Giving Fund)		173.76
Donation from Dir Biyabir management team for operating expenses		1,100.00
Total 2024 Revenue		**103,571.61**
Expenses		
Grants Paid Out		87,341.20
Northern Shewa Rebuilding	7,146.00	
School Girl Sponsorship	3,564.94	
N.Shewa Biruh Aemro Scholarship	6,312.68	
Relief for Amhara IDP from Wellega	58,936.20	
IDP Kids Program at RAA Library	4,218.10	
Dairy Farm Feasibility Study	1,299.00	
Partner Operating Expense Support	5,864.28	
Operating Expenses		1,088.83
Cloud Subscription	32.24	
Domain Registration	45.34	
Government Filing Fees	300.00	
Meeting Tools Subscription	163.10	
P O Box rental fees	194.00	
Tax Filing Fees	168.15	
Web Hosting Fee	66.00	
Bank/Wire Fees	120.00	
Total 2024 Expense		**88,430.03**
Total 2024 Revenue Less Total 2024 Expense		**15,141.58**
2024 Starting Balance		108,193.84
2024 Ending Balance		**123,335.42**
Actual 2024 Balance		123,336.02
2024 Discrepancy (Calculated Year-End Balance - Actual Year-End Balance)		-0.60
2024 Adjusted Ending Balance		**123,336.02**

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024

Stated 2024 Goals	Actual 2024 Accomplishment
Complete N.Shewa rebuilding project	Balance of funds has been sent to ADHENO but due to security situation, impacted schools are inaccessible. Project will be completed as soon as security improves
Implement economic empowerment projects for IDP at Bakelo camp.	489 skilled artisans in Bakelo camp have been funded to start micro-enterprises in 6 areas including tailoring, weaving blankets, basket weaving, crocheting etc
Fund economic empowerment projects for women victimized by TPLF terrorists in Lalibela	Due to security situation in Lalibela area no progress made on this project
Develop & implement new projects to rebuild communities in Amhara region devastated by war	Due to on-going active conflict in most of Amhara region, no new rebuilding projects have been designed or implemented
Continue "Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro" College Scholarship program and high school /elementary school student sponsorship program in N.Shewa	Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro" College Scholarship has been significantly expanded to include a new batch of the top 12 students every year (up from 7)
Support ADHENO to be a more self-sustaining organization	Dir Biyabir funded a feasibility study for a dairy farm to be run by ADHENO for revenue generation/ sustainability. Due to security situation in Amhara region, the farm is not feasible
Expand Dir Biyabir membership base	Dir Biyabir presence created on LinkedIn but has not shown impact yet. Due to resource constraints no other efforts implemented to expand membership base of Dir Biyabir
On-board a new Treasurer	New Treasurer was identified and on-boarded
Explore new mechanisms for fundraising	No progress

GOALS FOR 2025

- Implement emergency relief for famine victims in Bugna region of Wello
- Follow-up projects for IDP in Bakelo and Debre Birhan area
- Fund micro-enterprise for women victims of war
- Continue scholarship programs
- Support community libraries in N.Shewa
- Develop and implement new projects to rebuild communities in Amhara region devastated by war
- Expand membership base
- Enhance presence on social media: LinkedIn, FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube

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Thank You To Our Donors and Members

IDP Kids at Debre Birhan Seedling Station

It is so overwhelming to witness the endless conflict and tragedy in Ethiopia, and so frustrating to see every year bringing more of the same. The only way to keep ourselves from sinking into despair is to keep our eyes on the few bright points of light, i.e people who are working tirelessly to alleviate suffering, and to support the work of such inspiring folks.

If you are saddened and frustrated by the endless tragedy and injustice in Ethiopia, please channel your energy into supporting these bright points of light in Ethiopia, whether it's through Dir Biyabir or another organization, or even supporting people directly.

Our name is inspired by an Ethiopian proverb **"Dir Biyabir Anbessa Yassir"** (ድር፡ቢያብር ፡አንበሳ ፡ያስር) - It translates to "when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion". This proverb is an illustration of **Strength in Numbers.** You our members, are our web, and the more of you we have the stronger we are and the more challenges we can address. So please renew your membership annually, and encourage your friends and family to join. Please help us spread the word!

Thank you all so very much for your support in 2024, we look forward to working with you to transform even more lives and livelihoods in Ethiopia in 2025. We pray for a more just and peaceful year!