Dir Biyabir 2008 Year End Report

January 31, 2009

....Mobilizing resources for grassroots development in Ethiopia

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.dirbiyabir.org

Overview

2008 ushered in a new beginning, an era of collectively empowering the average person to change the world. Despite the looming challenges ahead of us, the prospect that we can get organized in a way that each of us can pitch in and align our efforts to drive significant change in the world is hugely exciting and energizing! The spirit of "Dir Biyabir Anbessa Yasir" (i.e. when spider webs unite they can tie up a lion) is very much aligned with the "Yes We Can" attitude and the bottom up approach that has changed the world. These are indeed exciting times and we are very fortunate to be here in the midst of it.

As challenging as 2008 has been, it also shaped up to be a remarkably fruitful year for Dir Biyabir. We won our first major grant from The Christensen Fund for a youth-based environmental conservation project in Ethiopia. We sincerely thank The Christensen Fund for this vote of confidence. We also raised emergency funds for famine relief in our project areas, an unplanned activity, but a necessity given the unfortunate emergency. We thank the eBay Foundation for matching donations from their employees for this cause. We continued to work closely with ADHENO, an Ethiopian NGO and our partner in Ethiopia who has been executing the projects we fund.

Dir Biyabir continues to be a voluntary organization and we commit to sending 100% of all funds raised directly to supported projects in Ethiopia.

Dir Biyabir focuses specifically on local grassroots projects in Ethiopia that are sustainable and that build capacity in the local population to pull themselves up from extreme poverty, so that long-term assistance is no longer needed.

In recognition of the enormous potential for driving positive change by mobilizing individuals, Dir Biyabir is a membership-based organization. Annual membership fees are a significant revenue source for the organization, and are directly used to fund selected projects.

Dir Biyabir was incorporated in the state of California on May 5 2006 and received Federal tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) public charity on January 10 2007.

Leadership Team

We have had some changes in the leadership team in 2008. Bibi Ephraim handed over the secretarial baton to Aida Abate. Bibi is a founding executive of Dir Biyabir and continues to work closely with the executive team.

Aida is a Research Scientist with over 10 years experience working in biomedical research and drug discovery both in Europe and the United States. She has led multiple research projects at Stanford University and Arbor Vita Corporation. She holds a PhD in Pharmacology and MS in Biochemistry from Martin Luther University in Germany. We are very happy to welcome her to our team. The rest of the executive team remains unchanged: Haeran Fisseha, chairperson; Merlene Robergeau, treasurer; and Yonas Fisseha, technical advisor.

Our board of directors: Theodros Kidane; Rami Haddad; Meqdelawit Germachew; and Fekre Ashagre continue to provide us with valuable guidance

All Dir Biyabir positions are voluntary and uncompensated. The executive team covers 100% of the operational expenses of Dir Biyabir

Membership

We are happy to see our membership ranks increase to 36 in 2008, up from 23 in December 2007. This represents a 57% growth year over year. Though this is short of our initial goal of doubling our membership by the end of 2008, it shows a strong growth trend and we continue to look for creative ways of recruiting new members. As a virtual organization, leveraging online tools is key to our success and we plan to use social networking sites such as Facebook to reach a wider audience. The opportunity to participate directly in grassroots projects is compelling, and we are confident that more people will share our vision and join our efforts.

Project Status

In 2007 Dir Biyabir sponsored three projects run by ADHENO. Two were under the youth entrepreneurship program and one under the Gudifetcha, reforestation program.

Youth Entrepreneurship

1. Bee-keeping enterprise

This project, initiated by one of the youth groups, "Goshebado Tsigereda Wetatoch Mahiber", aims at producing honey and bees wax. Both are in high demand and the latter is used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The youth had prepared a detailed business plan outlining their business plan, which was deemed to be feasible. DirBiyabir sent full funding ($15, 270 ETB or $1,651 USD) to the youth group for the bee keeping project. Funding was raised from membership dues and individual donations. Accomplishments to date by the youth includes: A 5 day training program given to the youth by the Woreda Agricultural and Rural Development office experts on modern apiculture and increasing the production of honey and beeswax ; Installation of 30 modern 3-stage beehives with movable frames in the Berkomas enclosure area where the natural vegetation is protected from animals and humans and has therefore been flourishing ; Transfer of Twenty-one bee colonies into the beehives.

2. Irrigation-based Horticulture

A second youth group, "Magiwasha Inideg Yeatikilit ina Firafire Limat Mehaber" consisting of 35 youths had submitted a business plan to Dir Biyabir in June 2008 for irrigation-based horticulture. They proposed planting and harvesting vegetables and fruit trees including lowland fruits like citrus, mango, and papaya on 2 hectares of irrigable land at the edge of the Berressa River in a low land area known locally as Magiwasha Kola Sulai, 20 kilometers west of Debre Berhan, that the local administration had allocated to them. Following discussions on how they planned to handle disease and insect control, storage, and profit sharing, Dir Biyabir provided 90% ($21,447 ETB, i.e. $2,151 USD) of the requested start up capital of $23,830. The youth were asked to contribute the remaining 10% from their membership fees.

3. Reforestation and Environmental Protection

The purpose of this project is to engage rural youth (men and women) in the environmental rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation of their homeland. Dir Biyabir developed grant applications for this project and in October 2008 won a grant of $24,500 USD from The Christensen Fund to fund this project in full. The project site is Kasset in Northern Shewa. The project will be based on ADHENO's award-

winning Gudifetcha of Trees program (see point 4 below) in which local farmers and villagers participate in conservation by adopting trees and being responsible for their care and survival. Dir Biyabir has wired 50% of project funds and project execution started in November 2008. The balance of the funds will be wired in the second quarter of 2009. Project goals are:

a. Recovering the rich indigenous environmental bio-diversity of this severely at-risk region of the world.
b. Actively engage the local youth and keep them connected to their land and culture. Provide them a viable option to fleeing to the cities.
c. Helping the fertility of the land to recover and allowing the continuation of a culture and livelihood that has been based on the land for centuries. Without active intervention, the area is at risk for complete desertification and abandonment.
d. Fostering a culture of environmental conservancy among the youth who are then most likely to pass it on to their families and lead the community in environmental stewardship. Such a culture of environmentalism is severely lacking in the region and is much needed.
e. Develop a local water source to make adequate water available for tree nursery, as well as for use by the local community.

4. Gudifetcha of Trees

Last year we had reported on the initiation of an ADHENO tree-planting project under the Gudifetcha of trees program. Though this was not a Dir Biyabir project, Dir Biyabir's youth environmental project will be modeled after this program so an update is appropriate.

A nursery with a capacity of producing 300,000 seedlings a year was established at Shola, near the Metkoriya kebele administration area in Northern Shewa. During the first half of 2008, 146,000 seedlings of indigenous tree species including Hagenia abyssinica, Cordia africana, Acacia abyssinica, and and Faidherbia albida were raised. Exotic species such as Sesbania sesban, Leucaena leucocephala, Eucalyptus globulus, were also planted.

5. School Books

ADHENO built the first modern primary school in the village of Workegur in Goshe Bado in 2006 with funding from the Japanese Embassy and additional support from Dir Biyabir members. Though the school is a modern facility, books and equipment are still severely lacking. In June 2008 Dir Biyabir provided funds for textbooks for the school. 320 Amharic, 320 Math, and 319 English textbooks were purchased for grades 1 through 4 (total cost of 4538.50 ETB).

A book shelf was also purchased and handed over to the school. The plan is to have each student return the books at the end of the academic year so they may be used by incoming students in the new academic year.

6. Famine Relief Aid

Though it is not the mission of Dir Biyabir to provide emergency assistance, in August 2008 we received a request for emergency assistance from ADHENO as famine had affected some populations in the project areas in the Bassona Worana district of Northern Shewa. Since neither the district nor ADHENO were able to secure funds anywhere else, Dir Biyabir agreed to help in this exceptional case, and raised $4,000 USD in 2 weeks from members and supporters, and the funds were wired on September 17 2008. The funds were used to locally purchase 5,800kgs of wheat. ADHENO also raised additional funds to purchase 1,000kgs of chickpeas. The food was distributed to a total of 1,133 impacted individuals.

Financial Status

For the period January 1 2008 to December 31 2008:

Revenue

Membership (includes eBay match) ..…….... $ 3,450.00

Donations (for text books) ……..…….....……$ 550.00

Donations (for famine relief- includes eBay match)....….$ 4,000.00

Donations (unallocated) ……..….....$ 1,970.00

Grants (Christensen Fund – Youth Gudifecha) $24,500.00

Dir Biyabir Exec Team Donations for Operations .....$ 307.00

Total Revenue $34,777.00

Expense

Grants paid out –Youth Gudifecha of Trees $12,000.00

Grants paid out – Bee-Keeping Enterprise..…..…….. $ 1,916.00

Grants paid out – Horticulture Enterprise..…..…….. $ 2,474.00

Grants paid out – Text Books ..... $ 632.00

Grants paid out – Famine Relief ..... $ 4,000.00

Total Grants paid out $21,022.00

Dir Biyabir Operational Expense ……..……...…..…....$ 301.88

- P.O Box Rental $105.00
- Dir Biyabir Website Hosting ..... $ 16.50
- Adheno Website Hosting ..... $ 16.50
- Adheno Domain Registration ..... $ 10.00
- DirBiyabir Domain Registration .....$ 9.00
- Bank Wire Fees .....$ 70.00
- Paypal Transaction Fees ……...…...$ 74.88

Total Expense $21,323.88

Balance

2008 Revenue – Expense ……..…….. $13,453.12

Carryover Balance from 2007 ….....…….. $ 6,475.00

Balance on December 31 2008 ..... $19,928.12

Key Accomplishments in 2008

- Increased membership to 36, a 57% growth from 2007
- Increased annual revenue to $34,777, a 329% growth from 2007
- Established a relationship with the Christensen Fund and won a grant award for an environmental conservation project in Ethiopia
- Raised and sent emergency funds to address famine in project area
- Funded youth bee-keeping micro-business enterprise
- Funded youth irrigation-based horticulture micro-business enterprise
- Provided funds for text books for primary school in Workegur
- Updated Dir Biyabir website with new content on project updates
- Completed 90% of project to revamp Adheno website (www.adheno.org). New site will be launched in first quarter of 2009
- Reduced operational expense to 0.9% of total revenue and funded it completely by executive team so that 100% of donations and membership fees are allocated to projects
- Completed project site visit and met with target population (at personal expense)

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Dir Biyabir

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Goals for 2009

In 2009 Dir Biyabir will focus on the following goals:

- Monitor all funded projects and ensure implementation of project goals. Communicate project progress on website
- Send balance of funds allocated to youth environmental project to Adheno, and closely monitor progress.
- Provide guidance and consultancy for long-term survival/continuation of funded projects especially the youth projects on bee keeping and horticulture
- Increase membership by 50% from 2008. Leverage on-line social networking tools such as Facebook to reach a wider audience
- Continue to work with the Christensen Fund to develop grant applications for funding of projects in Ethiopia
- Widen scope within Ethiopia by identifying local NGO's in other regions of Ethiopia that meet Dir Biyabir criteria, and selecting new grass-roots projects to support in these regions.
- Research additional foundations or agencies that can fund Dir Biyabir sponsored projects
- Explore a school garden program for the Workegur Primary School that could be linked to a school breakfast program, as well as a project to build a school library.
- Continue to allocate 100% of donations to projects: Operational expense will be kept at below 5% of total revenue and will be completely funded by executive team so that 100% of donations, grants, and membership fees will be allocated to project work in Ethiopia
- Recruit 1-2 key additional volunteers to help with Dir Biyabir operational activities in order to scale the organization
- Strengthen Dir Biyabir executive team through more face-to-face meetings and brainstorming sessions

Thank You to our Members!

Despite all the challenges, 2008 was a great year for Dir Biyabir as a public charity. The support of our members was key in keeping us motivated, and we thank you sincerely for that.

Please spread the word among your friends and family and help us recruit more members as our strength lies in numbers. If those spider webs are to tie up a lion, the more of them the better!

Thank you all so much for your support in 2008. We know there are tough times ahead in 2009, but we are also entering the New Year with renewed hope, optimism, and energy. Together we can meet the challenges ahead of us.

We wish you and yours a very happy and successful 2009!!