

# DIR BIYABIR 2009 YEAR END REPORT

January 30, 2010

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## OVERVIEW

2009 was a very challenging year for many of us. But with dogged determination and resilience, it seems we have weathered the storms and we should now face sunnier days at the dawn of this new decade. The aftermath of the horrific earthquake in Haiti this month, however, was a tragic reminder of the precarious existence of entire populations that are neglected by their own governments, and that are perpetually perched on the edge of disaster. We hope 2010 finally finds Haiti (and Ethiopia) on a solid path to good governance and self-sufficiency.

In 2009 the Dir Biyabir team reported good progress on funded projects, sponsored new projects, and drove membership up by over 80%. Significant and encouraging results were seen on key youth initiatives such as the environmental project (funded by The Christensen Fund) and the horticulture enterprise. New projects were sponsored for poultry rearing for girls as well as support for a very industrious Women's Enterprise in the capital, Addis Abeba, that is run and staffed by survivors of leprosy. Unfortunately, we have also suffered a set-back on our school-books project.

We continued to work closely with

ADHENO, an Ethiopian NGO and our key partner in Ethiopia who has been executing most of the projects we fund. ADHENO has been a highly effective, efficient, and accountable organization to work with in Northern Shewa. The success of these projects is due to the ability of ADHENO to deliver results with little money and under difficult circumstances; our partnership with them will remain strong. A key goal for Dir Biyabir is to support similar effective development projects in other regions of Ethiopia. Thus we have started our search for new potential partners in Ethiopia that are as efficient and effective as ADHENO and that operate in other regional areas of Ethiopia. We are soliciting input from our members to identify new, small, highly effective grass-roots development initiatives.

Dir Biyabir continues to be a voluntary organization and we still commit to sending 100% of donations and membership fees directly to supported projects in Ethiopia.

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

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

The leadership remained mostly unchanged in 2009 with the exception of two very welcome additions. Ksenia Siegel signed on to assist our Treasurer and has been providing valuable help with our accounting. Blaine Sergew graciously accepted our invitation to join our board. We are very happy to welcome Blaine and Ksenia to the Dir Biyabir team. The rest of the executive team remains unchanged: Haeran

Fisseha, Chairperson; Aida Abate, Secretary, Merlene Robergeau, Treasurer; and Yonas Fisseha, Technical Advisor.

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

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

## MEMBERSHIP

In 2009 we saw our membership ranks increase from 36 to 66, an 83% growth year over year. This exceeds our goal of 50% growth from 2008, and is especially remarkable given economic conditions. The renewal rate in 2009 was 78%. We thank our members for their continued support. In 2010 our goal is to get membership renewals earlier in the year. We strongly encourage our members to renew their annual

membership in the first half of 2010.

In 2009 we recruited 12 new members at our first outreach, a booth at the Ethiopian New Year Celebration in San Jose, CA on September 6. Dir Biyabir T-shirts were printed for this event and these unique shirts are still available via our website for a small donation. All proceeds from the T-shirts will go towards projects so we encourage you to get your shirt before they run out!

## PROJECT STATUS

We have updates on ADHENO projects we sponsored including three youth-enterprise projects as well as our biggest project, Reforestation & Environmental Protection. We also have some information on our new partnership with The Addis Ababa Region Ex-Leprosy Women's Work Group.

In addition, we are soliciting input from our members for additional projects we can sponsor in other regions of Ethiopia. If you know of small non-profits that meet the following key criteria, and that operate in Addis Ababa or south of Addis Ababa, we would like to hear from you:

- Focus on very poor communities
- Develop people's capacity to help themselves & not rely on aid
- Track record of executing highly effective projects at very low cost
- High credibility with the target communities and active engagement of the local population in all projects
- Highly transparent – provide project updates via reports and pictures
- Contact person available by email
- Easily accessible for site visit

### Reforestation and Environmental Protection

This project was initiated with funding

from the Christensen fund. Its purpose is to implement environmental rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation projects by engaging and training local youth. The approach is to follow the "Gudifecha of Trees" method that has shown success in other projects. Individuals "adopt" and care for trees, and each person is remunerated based on the trees that survive.

The first year saw great strides being made towards developing the required infrastructure.

- 1) A tree nursery with the capacity for producing 100,000 tree seedlings was built and existing nurseries were also reinforced.
- 2) Work on the development of a local spring has been completed and is providing access to clean water for the community as well as serving as the main water source for the tree nursery.
- 3) Following the appropriate training, project participants have constructed water conservation structures.
- 4) The group established an 8-hectare (approx. 20 acres) area closure near the newly established nursery. This area is protected from human and animal encroachment and will also be planted with trees.





## Youth Entrepreneurship

### 1. Irrigation-based Horticulture

This was a project initiated by the youth group Magiwasha Fruits and Vegetable Production Cooperation. In October 2008 Dir Biyabir awarded this group \$21,447 ETB (\$2,151 USD, 90% of what they requested). These youth have been successfully working together and have shown impressive results in one year.

At the beginning of 2009, the youth had established their horticultural cooperative, registered it with the local government, and received training on financial management.

By July 2009 they had planted and harvested 4000 kg (approximately 9,000 lb) of onions from 1 hectare (approximately 2.5 acres, or 10,000 square meters) of land. Sales of the onion harvest generated revenue of about \$15,000 ETB (\$1,328 USD).

Noteworthy was the ability of the group to produce results under challenging conditions including difficult terrain that made irrigation laborious, and a root disease that attacked their vegetable.

The youth have also expanded their project and planted 50 orange (Valencia) and 71 Mango seedlings with help from ADHENO. There is also a plan to take key members of the group on a trip to visit successful fruit farms in the Awash Valley to learn from the farmers' experiences in fruit production in this region. The youth have also worked the land for Teff and expect to have good harvest soon.

### 2. Bee-keeping enterprise

In 2008 the "Goshebado Tsigereda Wetatoch Mahiber youth group had sought and received funding from Dir Biyabir to initiate a bee-keeping project to produce honey and bees wax. By the end of 2008, they had organized

themselves, received the appropriate training, and had installed and populated 30 modern beehives. In 2009 the group installed seven traditional bee hives each containing bees that the team planned to transfer to the modern hives.

Although initially promising, the youth have not shown as much progress as expected. They have not worked together effectively as a team to overcome challenges, and the location of the beehives was also not very accessible. ADHENO, who has been overseeing this project, determined that the best way to move forward was to allocate beehives to individuals who would then be held accountable for success. We are hopeful that this "restructuring" will yield better results in 2010.

### 3. New Poultry Rearing Project

With the ultimate goal of developing a self-sustaining system in which students can improve their nutritional needs, we have initiated a pilot poultry-rearing project in collaboration with ADHENO. The goal is to help school kids develop new skills that will enable them to improve their meager diet. This project is initially focused on a selected number of students from the Workegur Primary School. Thirty girls have been given training on poultry rearing and each has been given three, 3-month old chicks (which are old enough to start laying eggs) and some initial commercial feed. The eggs will supplement the girls' diets, and they are expected to sell the extra eggs to generate some income. The girls will also be encouraged to expand their operation as they start making money. Based on the success of the pilot project, Dir Biyabir will fund an expansion of the project to more students. Dir Biyabir has wired the funds for the initiation of this project (\$ 850 USD equivalent to about \$10,625 ETB. The chicks were purchased a few weeks ago and we are eagerly tracking the progress of these girls.



## School Books Project

ADHENO had built the first modern primary school in the village of Workegur in Goshe Bado in 2006. 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) through the local government, which has the sole authority to buy school textbooks. The local officials stored the books in a government warehouse and efforts to retrieve these books from the warehouse and distribute them to the students met with strong resistance from the local government for reasons that are not clear. After trying unsuccessfully for over one year to recover and distribute the books, it appears unlikely that these books will be released for use in the targeted school as planned, and efforts to retrieve them have had to be abandoned. Dir Biyabir has notified the four members who together contributed over 85% of the funds used for the purchase of these books. This has been an extremely frustrating and disappointing experience, but serves as a critical lesson learned that no funds should be placed at the disposal of organizations that are not Dir Biyabir approved. Despite this set-back, Dir Biyabir will continue to try to meet the dire need for books for school children in Ethiopia, but will ensure that books are purchased and placed directly in the hands of school-children with no third-party intermediary. Since this approach does not seem to be possible with textbooks, Dir Biyabir will sponsor the purchase and distribution of other books that are available in private bookstores. Dir Biyabir has already wired \$880 to Ethiopia, which is being held until we are satisfied with a proposal from a local organization to purchase and distribute books to local school children in need.



## Support for Women's Enterprise in Addis Ababa

In 2009 Dir Biyabir initiated a new relationship with the Addis Ababa Region Ex-Leprosy Women's Work Group, a small local enterprise that creates and sells high quality hand-made cotton textile products. It is located in a very poor area of Addis Ababa, Zenebwork, not far from the ALERT Leprosy Hospital. The group employs survivors of leprosy and is run by Woizero Birkinesh, herself a survivor of leprosy, and has been in operation for more than 25 years. The women attempt to sell their products locally and export them to foreign markets as well. However they are currently struggling to sell their products due to lack of sufficient access to markets.

The project proposed by this enterprise and sponsored by Dir Biyabir involved the construction of a semi-covered work area for workers to protect them from the elements and improve their working conditions and productivity. The proposal requested 10,000 ETB (\$880 USD) to build this covered work area and the funds were sent in full. However, the enterprise faced an urgent need for direct material (cotton) to avoid laying-off some women, and they decided to use the funds to purchase cotton and keep the women employed. Dir Biyabir has been in communication with the contact person for this project and there is now a mutual understanding that funds must always be used for their allocated purpose unless a re-allocation is agreed to by Dir Biyabir. The group has committed to build the shelter as planned within the next few months. Despite this temporary set-back the executive team unanimously agrees that it is still very worth-while to pursue a collaboration with this unique enterprise. Once the sponsored work area is completed as planned, additional projects will be explored. Dir Biyabir will also research opportunities for this enterprise to access niche markets in the US.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

- Increased 2009 membership revenues by 73% from 2008
- 2009 expenses exceeded revenue as the balance of funds for the youth environmental project (\$12,500) was wired to ADHENO. The grant for this project was received from The Christensen Fund in 2008
- Revenue fell significantly from 2008 levels as no grant applications were filed until end of 2009. In addition 2008 revenue included special one-time fund-raising for famine relief
- Operational expenses increased significantly in 2009 due to new printing and stationary requirements to support Dir Biyabir booth at the Ethiopian New Year celebration
- 98.7% of 2009 operational expense was covered by Executive team, coverage of remaining 1.3% of expense was missed due to error and will be covered in 2010 donation by executive team for operational expense

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

For the period January 1 2009 to December 31 2009:

### Revenue

Membership .....	\$ 5,970.00
Donations (for entrepreneurship) .....	\$ 160.00
Donations (unallocated) .....	\$ 1,560.00
Donations (T-shirts) .....	\$ 1,511.00
Dir Biyabir Exec Team Donations for Operations .....	\$ 662.00
<b>Total Revenue .</b>	<b>\$9,863.00</b>

### Expense

Grants paid out –Environmental Conservation .....	\$12,500.00
Grants paid out – Poultry Project.....	\$ 850.00
Grants paid out – Women's Work Group.....	\$ 880.00
Grants paid out – Books .....	\$ 880.00
<b>Total Grants paid out .....</b>	<b>\$15,110.00</b>
 T-shirt Printing Expense.....	\$ 1,373.90
<b>**Dir Biyabir Operational Expense .....</b>	<b>\$ 671.04</b>
P.O Box Rental .....	\$110.00
Dir Biyabir Website Hosting .....	\$ 16.50
Adheno Website Hosting .....	\$ 16.50
Adheno Domain Registration .....	\$ 10.00
DirBiyabir Domain Registration .....	\$ 9.00
Bank Wire Fees .....	\$ 60.00
Paypal Transaction Fees .....	\$ 99.47
Stationary .....	\$ 47.76
Printing .....	\$301.81
<b>Total Expense .....</b>	<b>\$17,154.94</b>

### Balance

2009 Revenue – Expense .....	(\$ 7,291.94)
Carryover Balance from 2008 .....	\$19,953.32
<b>Balance on December 31 2009 .....</b>	<b>\$12,661.38</b>

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2009



- Increased membership to 66, an 83% growth from 2008
- Reviewed and evaluated project progress for youth-based environmental conservation project and wired balance of TCF grant
- Successfully submitted a pre-proposal to The Christensen Fund (TCF) for phase 2 of the youth-based environmental conservation project in the Northern Shewa region of Ethiopia. Worked with ADHENO to develop and submit full proposal prior to the deadline. Decision on grant award is expected in February.
- Funded poultry rearing project for girls in elementary school
- Monitored progress on youth horticulture and bee-keeping enterprises
- Established relationship with the Addis Abeba Region Ex-Leprosy Women's Work Group and funded a project. Dir Biyabir member met with the group, visited their workshop, and completed site visit report. Follow up discussions completed to identify key needs of the group and how Dir Biyabir can help
- Initiated a search for additional projects in Southern Ethiopia
- Launched the new ADHENO web site ([www.adheno.org](http://www.adheno.org)).
- Updated Dir Biyabir website with project updates and Dir Biyabir activities
- Completed first professionally designed Dir Biyabir brochure at no charge
- Improved operational efficiency by recruiting key additional volunteers including an assistant treasurer and a new board member
- Launched first community outreach and membership drive at Ethiopian New Year Celebration in San Jose, CA on September 6, signed up 12 new members
- Printed Dir Biyabir T-shirts to generate additional donations and to gain more visibility for the organization. Broke-even in 2009, additional 100 shirts left that will generate donations that will be 100% revenue
- Held the first Dir Biyabir team-building event to build momentum and team cohesiveness, and to brainstorm new ideas for the group.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.dirbiyabir.org](http://www.dirbiyabir.org)

# GOALS FOR 2010

DIRBIYABIR@GMAIL.COM

- Follow up with The Christensen Fund on grant for phase 2 of the youth environmental conservation project. If grant is approved, kick-off phase 2 by wiring funds to ADHENO, and monitor project progress.
- Evaluate business plans for additional youth enterprise projects and fund the most promising proposal. Prioritize projects by women/girls
- Continue to monitor status of funded youth enterprise projects
- Continue to develop relationship with the Addis Ababa Region Ex-Leprosy Women's Work Group. Assist the group to access new markets for their products
- Identify new effective local grass-roots NGO's in Ethiopia and support projects in new geographical regions within Ethiopia
- Identify and implement a project to get books directly in the hands of school kids in need, without relying on school officials for distribution
- Continue to allocate 100% of donations and membership fees to projects: Operational expense will be completely funded by executive team so that 100% of donations, grants, and membership fees will be allocated to project work in Ethiopia
- Complete site visit of projects (at no expense to Dir Biyabir)
- Keep members updated on project progress throughout the year
- Strengthen Dir Biyabir executive team through more face-to-face meetings and brainstorming sessions
- Increase membership by 50% from 2009. Leverage on-line social networking tools such as Facebook to reach a wider audience
- Research additional foundations and agencies that can fund Dir Biyabir sponsored projects

## **THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS!**

Dir Biyabir continues to be a solid and effective group because of the support of our members. Your continued support validates our vision that when each of us pitch in, together we can start building lasting solutions to persistent challenges. We thank you for sticking by us even during difficult economic times.



Some of you have told us how energized and enthusiastic you are about the success of our projects. We are humbled and impressed by the folks on the ground in Ethiopia who are implementing these projects. They are the real heroes for getting things done with very little money and under very difficult circumstances. Let's continue to support them in their efforts to build up the capacity of the poorest to pull themselves out of extreme poverty.

Thank you again. We wish you and yours a very happy and successful new decade!!