April 2012

Dir Biyabir Quarterly Update

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Hand-embroidered wall art (top) and potholder made by LWWG.

Introduction

Dear members

In an effort to keep you better informed of Dir Biyabir activities, we are starting this quarterly newsletter to update you on project progress. We would also like this newsletter to serve as a reminder to you to renew your Dir Biyabir membership if you have not done so already.

In the second quarter of 2012 we are happy to report some great progress with the women's enterprise for leprosy survivors in Addis Abeba. We were especially excited to receive their pictures and see their happy and proud faces. Please read more about this project and the new opportunities it opens up for these women. Remember that your membership is what make this all possible.

Thank you all for your continued support!

Dir Biyabir Funds A women's Cooperative

Wzo Birknesh (founder of LWWG) sitting at the newly purchased computer in her office.

Yenenesh, the accountant of LWWG, getting ready to transition to computer.

We are happy to announce the initiation of a new project with the Addis Ababa Region Ex-Leprosy Women's Work Group (LWWG). LWWG is a small local enterprise that creates and sells hand-made cotton textiles. It is located in Zenebwork, not far from the ALERT Leprosy Hospital in Addis Abeba. The group has an inspiring story. It employs survivors of leprosy and is run by Woizero Birkinesh, herself a survivor of leprosy. Despite alienation and the stigma associated with leprosy, this group has demonstrated resilience in building up an enterprise that creates high-quality cotton textile and hand-embroidered cotton products. The embroidery tells stories of women and community and uses exclusively local raw materials.

Dir Biyabir's board member visited this group in 2011 and identified possible partnership with Dir Biyabir to expand their office capabilities. The Dir Biyabir team contacted Wzo Birknesh to discuss the feasibility of a capacity building project. Shortly thereafter, a proposal was submitted a proposal to equip their office with computer, printer and internet access. Training in computer and English skills for two of the members was also in the scope of the proposal. The objective of this project is to equip the group with the necessary tools so that they can communicate with potential customers abroad and get access to foreign market for their products.

The proposal was reviewed and approved in November 2011 and $2,300 was wired. In February 2012, the group sent an interim report detailing project status along with pictures and receipts of the purchased office equipment. Now, the office is equipped and both Wzo Birknesh and Yenenesh are enrolled in English and computer classes.

We are thankful to Anne, a friend of the enterprise, who played a pivotal role in regards to email communication between the LLWG and Dir Biyabir. We also thank members of Dir Biyabir who made this project possible.

For our members who travel to Ethiopia, and look to buy quality traditional woven household clothes, Wzo Birknesh and the group can be contacted at:

011 321 4907 (office)
0911 947 757 (mobile)