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# Dir Biyabir 2023 Annual Report

March 20, 2024

## OVERVIEW

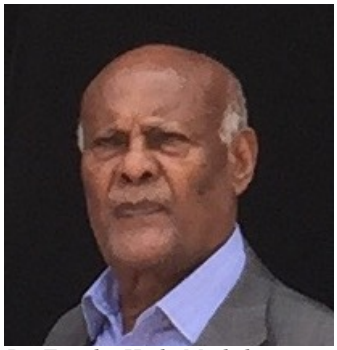
### Message From The Chairperson

In 2023 all of our projects were focused on the Northern Shewa region of Ethiopia. Northern Shewa is located within the Amhara region, and this region has been in a state of emergency since mid 2023. It is currently an active conflict zone with heavy civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. In addition the millions of Amhara civilians who were violently displaced from the Oromia region in several waves for the last 3+ years, continue to languish in various camps without adequate shelter, food or water. Even today, there is death and trauma on a daily basis in the Amhara region including the N.Shewa region where Dir Biyabir has been funding projects since 2007.

It is in this context that we find that 2023 has been yet another year where Dir Biyabir has had to shift from our mission to invest in the least privileged in their quest to lift themselves out of poverty. Instead of helping to lift up people so they may thrive, we have had to continue to focus on helping them survive through emergency relief for the displaced. Instead of building and improving infrastructure, we have had to rehabilitate what was destroyed, such as our project to rehabilitate schools looted by the terrorist group TPLF.

The devastation and need is so enormous, and our capability and scope so small that it is hard not to sink into despair. However we choose to keep our eyes on the few we can help, and we are profoundly grateful to have been able to make tangible impact on the ground. This impact is made possible due to the generous support of our members and donors, and our highly dedicated and efficient local partner in Ethiopia, ADHENO. ADHENO has been very courageously executing our projects under very challenging circumstances, including active military conflict. We continue to stress with ADHENO that their safety is the highest priority.

In this time of despair, we thank the ADHENO team for making it possible for us to light a candle of hope in the hearts of the suffering civilians of N.Shewa. We honor the memory of the brilliant, dedicated, compassionate, and tenacious founder and leader of ADHENO, Dr Fisseha Haile Meskal, who overcame countless obstacles to build ADHENO into a highly committed, ethical and competent organization that nurtures lives and livelihoods in Northern Shewa. Dr Fisseha passed in October 2022, but he lives on in the hearts of the thousands of farmers, students, and villagers whose lives were transformed by his work. He will always inspire and motivate us to continue his work.



*Dr. Fisseha Haile Meskel*

In 2024 we look forward to sustainable peace based on truth and justice, so the devastation may end and we may all focus on helping the people of Ethiopia thrive and not just survive. We pray for the safety of all the people of N.Shewa and indeed all of the Amhara region and all regions with active conflict.

## Leadership Team

In 2023 our executive team and Board remained unchanged:

- Chairperson - Haeran Fisseha
- Secretary - Eminet Ayele
- Treasurer - Yared Mengistu.

The Board consists of: Dr. Tadesse Wolde, Sam Smith, and Dr. Asrat Tesfayesus. We are grateful to have continuity in our team as it ensures smoothness in our operations.

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 projects in Ethiopia.**

# MEMBERSHIP

The membership levels are unchanged and are summarized below.

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

Membership fees are our only reliable and consistent source of revenue to fund projects in Ethiopia so we very much appreciate all of our members. 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 above as all funds received are allocated to projects.

We are happy to see new donors join our various fundraisers and we hope they stick around and join us as members, the more members we have the more projects we can fund!

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. Membership is simply a mechanism to raise funds for our projects in Ethiopia via membership fees. 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) Sending a check (please include your **email address** for receipts) payable to Dir Biyabir to:

Dir Biyabir, PO Box 914, Mountain View, CA 94042

2) As a one-time payment via PayPal on our website: http://dirbiyabir.org/page/become-a-member

# PROJECT STATUS

## Northern Shewa Rebuilding

The goal of the project is to rehabilitate schools and clinics in N. Shewa that were looted by the terrorist group TPLF during their brutal invasion of the region in November 2021. Dir Biyabir launched a fundraiser on October 2 2022, and in December 2022, we sent $50,000 to ADHENO to fund this project. In November 2023 an additional $12,000 was sent to Adheno to fund this project. Using this funding, in 2023 The Adheno team was able to register great success in rehabilitating the following rural schools and clinic:

1. Robi Zuti Primary school
2. Hedase Primary School
3. Chare Primary School
4. Shewarobit General Secondary school
5. Shewarobit Health Station

Though Wurba Primary was on our list, Adheno was unfortunately unable to deliver any items to them due to on-going conflict. There were 3 phases for this project in 2023. In Phase 1 (March 23 2023), Adheno purchased and delivered Computers, Printers, Generator, and a Chemistry Machine. In Phase 2 (May 23 2023), Adheno purchased and delivered school furniture (desks, chairs, lab stools), and science models were delivered. In Phase 3 (October 2023), Adheno purchased and delivered exercise books, stationary materials (A4 papers), and reference books to Hedase, Chare, and Robi Zuti primary schools as well as Shewarobit General secondary school.

*Chairs delivered to Chare Primary*

In their usual efficient execution and detailed reporting, the Adheno team has provided videos during the handover of these items to the schools and clinic. These videos demonstrate just how much this material was needed by the community, and how thankful they are to get this much needed support.

*Handing over generator & IT equipment to Shewarobit Secondary*

Shewarobit has suffered repeatedly during the last few years due to horrific violence inflicted on the community. Sadly they have received no support to help them recover so the teachers, students, and administrators showed huge appreciation for the little help we could provide. Here is a very touching video of children from Hedase Primary excitedly carrying tables delivered by ADHENO for pre-school kids in their school. Here is the Principal of Chare Elementary School showing the material they received and thanking Dir Biyabir and ADHENO for the support. We have many more videos uploaded on our YouTube channel, please take a look at the complete playlist.

*Students at Chare Primary with new Stationary*

A detailed list of items delivered to the schools and clinic is available on our website.

We had committed $70,000 for this project, by September 2023, we had raised $62,858. The balance will be covered out of Dir Biyabir's own coffers. The remaining funds will be sent in March 2024 for the final phase of this project. We thank all of our generous donors, and we wish much success to the teachers and students who are seeking an education under extremely challenging circumstances.

## Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro College Scholarship Program

We are delighted that in 2023 Dir Biyabir participated in the launching of an exciting new college scholarship program. The "N.Shewa Biruh Aemiro" Scholarship Program is the brainchild of longtime Dir Biyabir member and generous supporter, Ato Eyakem Woldehanna. The goal is to support the top students in N.Shewa and ensure they get all the resources they need to succeed in their college education. In the past 2 years it has been reported by the government itself, that only 3% of students get a passing grade on the national high-school leaving exam. This dismal statistic is a reflection of how low the quality of education has sunk in Ethiopia. It is within this context that Ato Eyakem approached Dir Biyabir with a vision to support the students from N.Shewa who come almost exclusively from poor rural households, but who nonetheless managed to succeed academically.

Given Dir Biyabir's long history in student sponsorship we were excited by this idea and we sat down with Ato Eyakem and our trusted local partner ADHENO to develop the concept and implementation details of this scholarship program. In February 2023, the scholarship program was kicked off by ADHENO in Debre Birhan during an award ceremony for the top 7 students (2 girls) in N.Shewa based on the results from the 2022 National High-School Leaving Examination. Ato Eyakem and the Dir Biyabir Chair Haeran, attended the program via zoom and gave a brief message. The first batch of students includes a young woman from Ataye, who showed remarkable resilience by earning high marks on the exam despite being displaced 3 times due to the repeated burning down of her hometown Ataye by Oromo extremist terrorists.

Each student is given a monthly stipend and a brand new laptop computer (computer given in the second year). Both are funded directly by Ato Eyakem. Dir Biyabir covers the one time cost for each student for bedding items, sportswear, luggage, and transportation which are all required for incoming college students (tuition is free in public universities). The stipend will cover all essential items for the students including reference books and photo copying expenses. In addition ADHENO follows up with each student and supports them with any challenges they face. In partnership between Ato Eyakem, ADHENO, and Dir Biyabir, this scholarship program is designed to ensure that these bright students have all the support they need, so they can focus on academics in college.

*First Batch Receive New Computers*

The results from this first batch of 7 scholarship students (in medicine, engineering and IT)) are impressive. Most students got only A's and A+ with a few also getting some B's. Hear directly from one of them . One of the 7 students got a full scholarship to the UAE and has now left the program.

On December 7, 2023 ADHENO held an award ceremony in Debre Birhan for the 2nd batch of top 7 students for the 2023-2024 academic year. This scholarship program was featured on the radio program "Finote Shewa" as one of the top new educational initiatives in N.Shewa. In 2023 universities in the Amhara region were closed due to military conflict so only those students assigned to other universities were able to attend. We wish them all much success.

*2nd Batch of Scholarship Winners*

## School Sponsorship - N.Shewa

2023 was a very challenging year for all students in the Amhara region. Many schools have been closed due to active military conflict, and civilian infrastructure including schools, homes, churches and hospitals have been significantly damaged by drone attacks. Kids have been severely traumatized by the military onslaught and the resulting civilian deaths and destruction. This is all continuing even to this day.

It is in this context that Dir Biyabir continued support for a school sponsorship program that was kicked-off in 2012. 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.

As background, this 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. 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.

### 2023- 2024 Academic Year

Dir Biyabir continued the school sponsorship program for the 2023-2024 academic year by supporting 2 university and 5 polytechnic college students that remain in our school sponsorship program. These are students that have been supported by Dir Biyabir from the beginning of high school. In addition, we continued to support 139 elementary school students by providing them with stationary that their families can not afford to purchase for them. All sponsored students are girls from families who can not fund their education.

Due to the rapidly increasing inflation and associated cost of goods in Ethiopia, funding for each student was increased as follows:

- 9,930 birr per student for each of 2 university students for 2023/24 academic year. This covers books and handouts, stationary, exercise material, personal hygiene material, and transportation cost.
- 12,130 birr per student for each of 5 college students for for 2023/24 academic year. This covers books and handouts, stationary, lab material, personal hygiene material, and room rental cost.
- 1,249 birr per student for each of 139 elementary school students for 2023/24 academic year. This covers 12 exercise books, 5 pens, 5 pencils, 2 rulers, and 2 erasers for each kid.

Even during the best of times, these students are seeking an education under very challenging circumstances. They are striving to left themselves and their families out of poverty through education. Now under a state of emergency and active military conflict, these students are living and studying under immense stress. We pray for their safety and wish them much success in their academic programs.

## Emergency Fundraiser For Amhara IDP From Wellega

In December 2023 Dir Biyabir launched yet another emergency fundraiser to provide relief for Amhara civilians fleeing extreme violence at the hands of Oromo extremist terrorists in Wellega.

Though Dir Biyabir is not focused on emergency relief, the recent tragic situation in Ethiopia has required us to fund several emergency relief efforts. In February 2022 we had raised funds to provide emergency relief for Amhara civilians mostly from Wellega fleeing endless rounds of horrific terror attacks by Oromo extremists simply because of their Amhara identity. At the time of our fundraiser, 30,000 of the 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.

*Bakelo IDP Camp*

In July 2023, about 4,145 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. Despite the large number of NGO's claiming a presence in this camp, alarmingly NONE were providing any food relief. Thus Dir Biyabir launched another emergency fundraiser to save their lives.

As always we relied on our trusted local partner ADHENO for the implementation details. In November 2023, the program officer from ADHNEO, Isayias, visited the IDP at Bakelo to understand first hand what their situation looked like and to hear directly from the IDP themselves what their critical needs were. Here is a video of an older woman explaining their situation. She was moved from kebele 8 in Debre Birhan to the Bakelo camp and had previously received emergency aid funded by Dir Biyabir and delivered by ADHENO. She recalls with gratitude, the support Dir Biyabir had provided them in 2022 and expresses her disappointment at being forgotten now. This young woman explains their critical need for food as well as teff being a higher priority. She also describes the suffering of especially elders in the cold climate of the Debre Birhan area, and she requests mattresses and blankets for them. The close quarters has also exposed them to communicable diseases . This gentleman says what little is available should be distributed equally to all in the camp. While we agree wholeheartedly with this, we were challenged to raise enough money for the whole camp. Our fundraiser was launched in December 2023.

It is disheartening to note that most of these displaced Amhara civilians were successful farmers in Wellega. They were producing enough food to feed not only their families but also the general population. Now they are forced to wait for hand-outs and this is a tragedy for them and for Ethiopia.

The glimmer of hope is that even in these dark times, these folks are finding ways to stay productive and earn income to help themselves. Many women like Gete are weaving traditional baskets, and some men like Ato Awel Tuha are weaving Gabis (cotton blankets). Dir Biyabir closed the fundraiser in February 2024 and ADHENO delivered emergency food relief as well as support for artisans. Details have been sent to our donors whom we thank profusely, especially the large donations that helped us reach all the IDP at Bakelo. We pray for better times for them all.

*Aid Funded by Dir Biyabir*

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Revenue** | | |
| Membership Fees | | 15,967.21 |
| General Donations from Individuals | | 25,039.65 |
| Relief for Amhara IDP from Wellega Fundraiser | | 13,274.00 |
| Northern Shewa Rebuilding Fundraiser | | 11,557.96 |
| Total micro-grants (Corporate Volunteer Hour Match, Amazon Smile, United Way, PayPal Giving Fund) | | 2,476.97 |
| Donation from Dir Biyabir management team for operating expenses | | 2,009.31 |
| **Total 2023 Revenue** | | **70,325.10** |
| **Expenses** | | |
| Grants Paid Out | | 20,816.96 |
| Northern Shewa Rebuilding | 12,001.98 | |
| School Girl Sponsorship | 5,624.99 | |
| N.Shewa Biruh Aemro Scholarship | 3,179.99 | |
| Wellega IDP Support | 10.00 | |
| Operating Expenses* | | 409.19 |
| Tax Preparation Fees | 100.85 | |
| Bank/Wire Fees | 85.00 | |
| P O Box rental fees | 182.00 | |
| Web Hosting Fee | 41.34 | |
| **Total 2023 Expense** | | **21,226.15** |
| **Total 2023 Revenue Less Total 2023 Expense** | | **49,098.95** |
| Ending balance from 2022 | | 59,231.54 |
| **2023 Ending Balance** | | **108,330.49** |
| Actual 2023 Balance | | 108,193.84 |
| 2023 Discrepancy (Calculated Year-End Balance - Actual Year-End Balance) | | 136.65 |
| 2023 Adjustment for balance discrepancy | | 136.65 |
| **2023 Adjusted Ending Balance** | | **108,193.84** |

***Note** - starting 2022 and moving forward, Dir Biyabir is reporting all revenue net transaction fees. Thus PayPal and all other transaction fees for donations will no longer be broken out as a separate operating expense line item.

# KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

| Stated 2023 Goals | Actual 2023 Accomplishment |
|---|---|
| Fundraise for, and implement additional emergency relief for Amhara IDP settled in Debre Birhan. | Fundraiser for 4,145 Amhara IDP in Bakelo kicked off in December 2023 and successfully completed in February 2024. Aid delivered by ADHENO |
| Fund new projects supporting education in N.Shewa. | Worked with Adheno to develop a project to re-stock schools in N.Shewa looted by TPLF. Fundraising is complete and most of the project was implemented in 2023. Last phase will be completed when security situation in Shewarobit area improves.<br><br>New college scholarship program ("Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro") kicked off for top 7 high-school graduating students in N.Shewa. |
| Fundraise for, and implement economic empowerment projects for women victimized by TPLF terrorists during their invasion of the holy town of Lalibela. | Dir Biyabir Treasurer, Yared traveled to Lalibela, met with the office of the Regional Bureau for Women and Children. He introduced ADHENO to this office to discuss economic empowerment projects for women victimized by TPLF terrorists. ADHENO developed proposal & submitted to Dir Biyabir. Fundraising is needed but project is now on hold due to security issues in the area. |
| Increase Dir Biyabir membership. | Membership revenue increased 50% from 2022 |
| Enhance presence on social media: Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and FaceBook | YouTube presence significantly improved via Dir Biyabir YouTube Channel. Fundraising and project updates have been posted on YouTube and also X (formerly Twitter). Instagram page created but not published. FaceBook presence needs to be revived |
| Re-start the publishing of Quarterly/ Semi-Annual Reports. More website updates | All project updates posted on website. However no Quarterly/Semi-Annual Reports published |

# GOALS FOR 2024

- Complete N.Shewa rebuilding project
- Implement economic empowerment projects for IDP at Bakelo camp.
- Fund economic empowerment projects for women victimized by TPLF terrorists in Lalibela
- Develop & implement new projects to rebuild communities in Amhara region devastated by war
- Continue "Semain Shewa Biruh Aemiro" College Scholarship program and high school / elementary school student sponsorship program in N.Shewa
- Support ADHENO to be a more self-sustaining organization
- Expand Dir Biyabir membership base
- On-board a new Treasurer
- Explore new mechanisms for fundraising

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## Thank You To Our Donors and Members

*Kids crocheting at Bakelo IDP Camp*

In 2023, Dir Biyabir focused on several education initiatives in N.Shewa. Given the on-going tragic situation in the Amhara region we also kicked off an emergency relief fundraiser in 2023 to support Amhara IDP violently displaced from the Wellega region by Oromo extremist terrorists. Donations from Dir Biyabir members and supporters, as well as corporate matching funds enabled us to fund these initiatives. A very big **Thank You** goes to all our members and supporters!

If you are saddened and frustrated by the endless tragedy and injustice in Ethiopia, channel your energy into doing something that makes an impact on the ground. One way to do that is to support Dir Biyabir projects that are helping innocent civilians get back on their feet. Please support our fundraisers and please renew your membership annually, and encourage your friends and family to join. P**lease help us spread the word!**

For our part, as always, we continue to commit that 100% of membership fees and donations received will be allocated to projects in Ethiopia.

Our name is inspired by a popular Ethiopian proverb **"Dir Biyabir Anbessa Yassir"** - "When Spider Webs Unite, They Can Tie Up a Lion". In the face of endless and mounting challenges, this proverb reminds us of the inherent strength in numbers. Thank you for all your support in 2023, we look forward to working with you to transform even more lives in Ethiopia in 2024. We pray for a more just and peaceful year!