



# Oasis Splash!

## Childcare

### Grace Village

#### **The School**

Exams, contests and competition seem to be the order of the day. As we head towards the end of the school year the children are all very busy. Terhas who has learning difficulties, an obsessive compulsive nine year old, who has repeated 1<sup>st</sup> grade three times, is making progress in the smaller more intimate class. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade teacher Mengesha is a gentle teacher and the wee pupils love him dearly. We plan to send him to learn Braille this rainy season with a blind lad from the refugee camp and then we will bring into Grace School the blind children around the area. Next year we will add signing for the deaf and so we reach further into the needs of the vulnerable of the area. A unique school to help unique children

#### **The children**

Our health officer telephone to tell us about an eight year old, she had her arm chopped off by a crazy uncle (currently in jail); her mother an itinerant worker, the grandmother used burning hot pepper to make her inhale as punishment; we thought oh dear what type of girl will she be? This darling child Hewan came and has settled in, she loves the babies, with her right arm she keeps busy and is compensating for the lack of her left arm.

A tiny little women of 36 years, a figure of mocking; made drunk and raped was identified by our Gender Based Violence Awareness campaign. She was pregnant! Full term! Brought to the hospital where by C/S she was delivered of little boy. "You keep him," she said, "I cannot, I am poor, he will be tormented like me..." So we added Lukas to our family.

#### **Childcare Apprentices**

The requirements for the housemothers was becoming increasing arduous, the government then stated that 'home mothers must be 6<sup>th</sup> grade...' Our little ladies were only 1<sup>st</sup> graders... However we have big sisters wanting to be trained at child care givers, Tsega, Rehwa, Alemnish, Martha, Gidey and even one young man Awash!

So with careful planning we set about making the changes, housemothers move into town, plan to attend evening school, improve their education status, and work as daily housekeepers, cooking for their beloved children and still seeing them most days.

The apprentices under our training will work directly with the children, ensuring bed, bath and story times with them and helping the older ones with homework. So far it is working!

### Community Care

The Women's Affairs Ministry informed us that more children should be cared for in their homes and communities. We support this fully. With adequate funding we can help so many more children within the community. We have had some five new sponsors and we are grateful for each one we get.

One step further is to include these children after Grade 10 in our workforce here, giving them priority over others to work within the village.

### Refugee Child Protection

#### **The children**

Seven hundred and sixty children queuing up for their rations, a huge performance representing excellent management! Then all the food is taken to the stores of Abraham's oasis at the refugee camp, each day this is distributed fairly to all the shelters where the unaccompanied minors sleep and exist with nine other children, five to a bed of stones... According to the children the number one problem is 'being away from Mum and Dad...' oh to go home and just see them is their heart desire.

In June 2009 we had been told that we would care for thirty children... We are now managing 760 with a prospective total of 2,000 by the end of 2010... Poor darlings so near to home yet so far...

#### **The workers**

Bethel has managed singled handed this whole project, now we have given her a fine young social worker Semhar to help with 170 of the unaccompanied minors and all the community children. This last group are children living with their immediate or extended families. They too come under our mandate for



protection. We hope to add more personnel over the next few weeks to help with the overall work. Alongside Bethel and Semhar are a wonderful group of refugee workers without whom none of our efforts could have been sustained.

## Health

### Maternal Health Outreach

Our super Health Officer has just gone out to the hospital because there is a fistula patient! The folk around North-western Zone now know Mehari as Mr. Fistula and call him when any of these poor suffering women come to them. We pick them up and send them to Mekelle where the Hamlin Fistula Centre helps them with surgery and repairs of their fistula.

He continues the efforts in new Woredas for maternal health awareness and we are planning a more structured form of Gender Based Violence Awareness since we found little Hewan and Mebrat, the miniature mother. We are convinced that there are more just like them who need our help. Tselemti is one area where ten and eleven year old girls are still being married off to older men; this is a sure precursor to obstetric fistula because they are not yet fully grown.

## Farming

### Grace Farm

A new component for Emnet Coop has developed! Cow dung patties! The lads are out early collecting this precious commodity, all over the compound these smelly cow pies are drying! The refugee camp has no more wood and the cow dung burns perfectly for making the Ethiopian bread... We have a great market! At \$4 a bag the lads are making money from waste.

The other coop has been put into the hands of a former fistula woman and a person living with aids and they are doing well. The girls have all transferred to childcare apprenticeships. We are selling milk at the front gate, making butter and cottage cheese.

### Kelakil

We visited Kelakil where some 35 women have rented a small mud house and established a work rota for the cooperative members. Inside was a buzz of activities, some making baskets, others spinning cotton by hand, and still others carding wool for carpet making. As we stood talking to the

women, one woman came up and asked if we could give her food for her twins... She had one month old babies with her, one on her back and one in her arms. The mother looked so weak, pale and frail. We are currently helping several families in this way with milk and food supplements for their babies.

The other farming projects are holding their own at this time. Everyone is preparing for the rains...

## Buildings

### Reservoir and Wells

The well is still being dug by hand and at 14 metres down... The well digger told us he has reached Holland, but we doubt that because Holland has plenty of water and we don't... The storage-reservoir is now complete. With the rainy season approaching we will fill this storage-reservoir and keep it as back up for the dry times at the village. It is very big and will hold a lot of water!

## The Rainy Season

We are looking forward to the rainy season when Emnet Coop will make some profit (we hope) from the farm, we hope to reforest our land where we can and where there is sufficient soil to plant... We seem to have plenty of rock!

The girls and one young man will learn to care for children and run a small home for four to seven children; the children will take part in club activities, art, drama, English, sports etc.

## Donors

You dear friends have made all this possible! We are still looking for funding for next year's Grace School. We have not paid off the required fee for the reservoir. But we do have food on the table, peace in our homes, joy in our hearts and songs on our tongues!

Thank you for caring! God bless you all,

*Karin u /d Bosch & Ruth C. Kennedy*