

Progress Report on the Debre Chiwa village school by Alex Doaga - Jan 2015

The concept of this school project emerged two years ago.

Let me tell you what has happened since last October, when your donations provided the funds to enable us to take on bigger projects.

The school was initially two adjoined rooms with no separation. The students were seated directly on the dirt floor. The Debre Chiwa village school was considered a satellite school and as such received no state funding, only what the local population was able to provide in terms of support.

By the month of March 2014, Messi, our local guide, and myself were working on plans to expand the school through the addition of a new construction that would see the addition of another classroom. This increase in capacity would enable the students to remain at the school beyond the second grade. The original limited space meant that classes could only be offered up to the second grade and so any students over the age of 10 who wished to continue their studies were required to reach a neighbouring village by foot.

Donations of 1500 birr (equiv to £500) enabled construction of the third classroom which took place over the rainy season. To ensure that the project funds were used effectively, a dedicated member of our Exodus team, Alfo, oversaw the project. As he is also a carpenter, he was hired to undertake the construction.

Alfo took pride in his role in this project, knowing that his work would help the local children. His work ethic and commitment to the project served as a positive example to the village residents. In October 2014 we learned that the local community is now building a fourth classroom.



Here is Alfo inside the room he built, at the time the November shipment arrived at the school.

This is inside the new classroom in October, a few weeks before we brought in the new benches.





Alfo's room is the middle section. The difference in height at the roof level demarcates the original two rooms from the new addition. The framed portion is the fourth classroom being built by the village.

This past October we received a further £1700 in donations. These funds enabled us to supply the school. The Rotary Club donated £470 which purchased school supplies and the balance of the funds was spent on the following equipment for the school so that the children will now have surfaces to work on and no longer be required to sit on the floor:

-30 new benches. We modified the design to add a reinforcing brace to the underside, thus ensuring that they will last longer.

-5 chairs and 4 teacher's desks, one for each room and two more simple tables for the teachers' room.

-4 lockers for the teachers' room, to ensure safe storage of all the games and supplies purchased.

-4 new blackboards for the classrooms.

-10 different posters to be hung on the classroom walls to brighten the mud walls and to be used as teaching aids by the teachers.

Previously this was a school of 120 students (figure as of March 2014) being taught by two teachers. This project and the passage of six months have seen the student population double, and a similar increase in teachers. Now 250 students are able to attend the school and are taught by two female and two male teachers.

As a result of the increase in students, the school is now receiving State funding. While the state provided 40 sheets of tin roofing, your donations went to purchase the remaining 20 sheets required for Messi's current construction. In addition to the tin roofing, sections of transparent fiberglass sheeting were purchased. Their installation will enable better light in the classrooms. The State will cover salaries and some manuals. Other needs or future additions and improvements will still need to be funded independently.

Teaching materials and school supplies were purchased from Addis and Gondar. Some of the manuals are very hard to find. In Addis we were assisted in this quest by an Ethiopian teacher, Ye Alem. With her assistance we were able to locate and purchase some rare manuals.



We also purchased lots of games, paints, cardboard, notebooks, and pens. Have a look at the pictures to see some of the great supplies now available to the students. I was worried how the games would survive the transport, but it all arrived intact. I guess Bella carried them himself.

There were three shipments this autumn, consisting of:

- First 15 benches
- Two chaps from our team, Bela and Fente, took the second transport (approx 500kg) by truck from the town of Debark to the village of Chiro Leba. The remaining distance was covered either by mules or by being carried on people's shoulders, all the way to the school.

Pictured below is our trusty Fente, resting outside the school building after two crazy days during which he and Bella managed the delivery of almost half a ton of equipment .



- Messi and Bella will make sure the last items (4 lockers and 4 tables) finished by the welder reach the village.

In terms of upcoming needs, more student benches and desks will be needed for the fourth classroom once the village completes its construction.

Looking to the future, other improvements could include the construction of a fence around the school, a water collection system so the kids could wash their hands and the construction of a toilet.

The pictures speak for themselves. I wanted to share with you what your donations have helped achieve and to say Thank You for your support. This is a story full of very positive news.

We managed to involve quite a few people in this school project, but....without your kind support none of this would have been possible. A big Thank You for all of you!

Thanks to all of you who have donated so far and have helped us double the numbers of kids attending the school. If anyone is interested in continuing to help and donate further then please contact Exodus or have a look at <https://mydonate.bt.com/events/debrechiwa/204114>

A gesture like this means a lot for the 250 kids now attending the school. The success of this project and the improvements it is making for the children in the village draw me back to the Ethiopian highlands with more enthusiasm and hope for their futures.

Regards, Messi and Alex.

p.s. photos are from October and November 2014. Exodus has a copy of all the receipts and accounts if anyone is interested in seeing exactly what we spent.