

SELAM

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2025

"Hello"

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UPDATE

FROM THE CEO

In this edition of Selam I've striven to give you a closer look at some of the realities on the ground in Ethiopia, including updates that are rarely covered in our Australian news.

Thanks to our trusted partners working on the frontlines, we receive up to date, first-hand information about the situation and how it's directly affecting the work you support.

Most of this work takes place in difficult circumstances. Security challenges remain a key issue, as ongoing internal conflicts and unrest throughout the country hinder our partners' efforts and expose their staff to considerable danger. High inflation has significantly increased the cost of operations and limited the number of people that our partners can aid – a situation that the recent pause in USAID funding has only worsened. In addition, natural disasters make existing crises worse and often give rise to new emergencies, now with prolonged drought leaving people in the north-east at risk of dying from thirst.

In the face of such blatant hardship and poverty, I recall to you a quote from Sir Bob Geldof:

"It's not about charity. It's about justice, and never looking away."

To me this statement captures so much of what we strive to do alongside you.

Looking ahead, I'm pleased to share that our next Project Partner Conference will take place in Addis Ababa in November. This will be an important moment to hear directly from our partners in Ethiopia about how they're adapting to the changing landscape, and how we can best support them moving forward. I look forward to sharing those outcomes with you.

Finally, I want to remind you that your support isn't just appreciated – it's absolutely essential. Thank you for never looking away.



Sharon Elliott
CEO
Ethiopiaaid Australia

In the last six months:

127,251 activities

to educate about the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriage were carried out by 50 Women Extension Workers in Afar.

1,153 pregnant

women delivered their babies safely thanks to pre- and post-natal care.

325

terminally ill patients received
palliative care.

182 women

suffering from obstetric fistula received holistic repair surgery and rehabilitation.

747

rural children

offered the chance to learn literacy and numeracy
(more than half were girls!).

5000+

disaster-stricken families in Afar

received emergency aid.

How do these numbers contribute to our broader mission, ending poverty in Ethiopia?

Each of these achievements is a step toward breaking the cycle of poverty. By helping women give birth safely, access fistula surgery, or avoid harmful practices like FGM and child marriage, you're addressing root causes of poverty – like maternal mortality, preventable health issues, and lack of education. Supporting children's learning boosts the potential of a whole generation. And for disaster-hit families, emergency aid is more than short-term relief

– it's giving families the tools they need to build long-term resilience.

SITUATION UPDATE

WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, ETHIOPIA

In April, the World Food Program issued a dire warning about the situation in Ethiopia. Malnutrition and widespread humanitarian needs are increasing, and made worse by the devastation of continuing drought in much of the country.

WFP reported that:

- 10 million people were already facing hunger and malnutrition across Ethiopia.
- Malnutrition rates are alarmingly high, with 4.4 million pregnant and breastfeeding women and children in need of treatment.
- In some regions, including Afar, child wasting has surpassed the 15 percent emergency threshold
- Poor rainfall so far in 2025 means increasingly serious drought conditions

EMERGENCY APPEAL UPDATE

HOW YOU'VE HELPED RESPOND

On behalf of Ethiopiaid staff, project partners in Ethiopia and the communities we serve, thank you to all who rallied and gave to our emergency appeal earlier this year. Your compassion raised a total of \$73,622 which aided the work of our long-time, on-the-ground partners, the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA). Your cumulative efforts helped provide immediate life-saving aid – like access to clean water and food support for malnourished breastfeeding mothers – and continues to fund long-term recovery and disaster mitigation strategies.

Valerie Browning, Program Director at APDA, shares a special message of gratitude:

"I want to thank you all for the support you've given. You listen to our daily needs. Through Ethiopiaid Australia, you have literally saved 60,000 people from thirst very recently. We couldn't find other assistance. USAID is closing, other governments are giving less assistance. I phoned Sharon and she sent me money thanks to your support. It is amazing and I thank each one of you."

WHAT'S NEEDED NOW

Valerie Browning confirms what the World Food Programme has reported: the short rains expected in March and April were almost non-existent. At the time of writing, some regions have gone nearly 11 months without rainfall.

With the help of Ethiopiaid, APDA continues to deliver mobile health and education services to more than 700,000 nomadic Afar people living in remote areas that can't be reached by road. Among the most urgent needs right now are water trucking and livestock support. Right now, over 90,000 people in Kori and Dubte are relying on APDA-operated water trucks for survival, which cost \$1,250 per day to run. At the same time, veterinary medicines and animal feed are needed for approximately 5,000 households who rely on their livestock for survival. It costs \$3.55 for one month's worth of feed (9kg).

Scan me

to watch Valerie's personal message in person





DID YOU KNOW:

To find a woman like Keriya who is living with fistula, often in isolation and fear, and transport her to hospital for surgery it costs \$122? In Australia that might equal a new pair of shoes or two, or half a week's worth of groceries for a family; yet in Ethiopia that equals a new life and safer, brighter future for a woman and her family.

^ Above and front cover: Keriya receiving care at Hope of Light Hospital

FEATURE STORY

HOPE AFTER HEARTBREAK: KERIYA'S PATH TO RECOVERY

In Ethiopia, becoming a mother can be one of the most dangerous things a woman will do in her lifetime.

For four long months, Keriya lived with the pain and stigma of incontinence, unaware of its cause. It wasn't until she heard about obstetric fistula and the specialised treatment available through our partner, Hope of Light, that hope began to return to her life.

Keriya had been married for 13 years and already had two beautiful children - a 10-year old daughter and a 5-year old son - when she went into labour with her third child. The labour lasted for 24 agonising hours and ended in tragedy. Keriya's baby was stillborn.

To add to the devastation, Keriya developed obstetric

fistula as a result of the prolonged labour. She could not control her bladder and was confused and frightened by what it would mean for her life.

Despite everything she had endured, Keriya maintains her optimism and her warm smile. As she prepared for surgery, she expressed to the medical team how lucky she felt to have the opportunity to be cured. "I'm so happy to be here," she said. "I'm looking forward to being cured." (Normally repair surgery costs \$926 and transport to and from the hospital costs \$72 but this is provided free of charge at the

Hope of Light hospitals you support.)

Although she and her family are still coming to terms the terrible loss they suffered, Keriya remains hopeful and focused on her recovery.

Once healed, Keriya returned to her home in Oromia, where she was eager to get back to farming alongside her family and being part of her community again. "I miss working in the fields," she told the team at the hospital before she left. "I'm ready to go back to the farm and caring for my children."

TAX APPEAL IMPACT

“...IT’S LIKE GIVING THEIR LIFE BACK”

In light of the USAID freeze, this first half of the year has been worrying for our project partners, particularly partners operating in the health and maternal health spaces. That’s why it was so especially touching to see how many people from all around Australia gave with open hearts to our fistula tax appeal. We are still receiving gifts but are blown away to report that you’ve raised \$240,368 – and counting!

“On behalf of our fistula patients, I want to say thank you again. Curing obstetric fistula is like giving [them] their life back. I can’t tell you how much we are appreciating your support.” – Dr Ambaye, Senior Fistula Surgeon & Founder, Hope of Light

On top of identifying, treating and preventing fistula, over time, your donations help to decrease maternal mortality rates in a country where they are horrifically high and train more health professionals about a condition which is almost 100% treatable in Australia. Every gift – no matter the size – fuels this work. Thank you.



▲ Dr Ambaye, Senior Fistula Surgeon & Founder, Hope of Light

ADRIEN M&E

SEEING IT FIRST-HAND: VISITING THE FISTULA PROGRAMS



In April this year, Ethiopiaaid’s Partnerships Manager Adrien Baur travelled to Ethiopia to monitor and evaluate our programs and partners.

Here he shares one of the most poignant moments of the trip: visiting the fistula hospitals and fistula rehabilitation programs you support.

“One thing I especially remember is the contrast between the women waiting for surgery at the hospital where Hope of Light works, and those in rehabilitation at Healing Hands of Joy’s program. The tears, shame and fear that I witnessed at the hospital were transformed at the rehabilitation centre by smiles, a returned confidence and a sense of excitement for the future.”

“I interviewed two women at the hospital, and two Safe Motherhood Ambassadors. All four of them shared a similar feeling: without the work of Hope of Light and Healing Hands of Joy, their lives would not have improved the way they did. They all agreed to speak with me because they wanted to express their gratitude to everyone, everywhere, who helped transform their lives – and in the hope that, by sharing their stories, more women might have the same chance to heal through the programme of our partners.”

“One Safe Motherhood Ambassadors told me with a radiant smile:

“In my prayers, I do not only include my family and close ones, but all those who I know have enabled me to heal.”

PROJECT PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

“EMPOWERING CHILDREN IS CRUCIAL FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF A NATION”



▲ Mulugeta Gebru, CEO of our partner JeCCDO

As the CEO of an organisation called the Jerusalem Children & Community Development Organisation (JeCCDO), it comes as no surprise that Mulugeta Gebru is passionate about helping children. In this interview find out what challenges he faces in this field of work and what has inspired him throughout his 30 years.

1. How long have you worked in JeCCDO and what is your main role?

I have dedicated over 30 years of my career to JeCCDO, where I have had the privilege of serving in key leadership roles, including Chief Executive Officer. Throughout my tenure, I have played a significant role in transforming the organisation from a small-scale initiative into one of the most robust and influential civil society organisations in Ethiopia.

2. What inspired you personally to get involved in this kind of work?

From my young ages, I had a deep love for children, and it became my passion to support those in need, whether through mentoring, tutoring, or simply providing companionship. This passion led me to become actively involved in a child-focused organisation. I believe every

child deserves a nurturing environment and the opportunity to thrive, and I am inspired to make a difference in their lives.

3. What are some of the main challenges facing the people you work with?

The primary challenges include budget constraints, poverty, displacement, illiteracy, and a limited understanding of the resources and methods available to them that could facilitate positive change in their lives. The communities I engage with frequently experience a significant gap between their needs and the responses from support systems.

4. Do you keep in contact with children that JeCCDO has helped?

Yes, I absolutely do. I take immense pride in this. Over the years, I have observed

many children who attended our childcare centre grow and develop both mentally and emotionally. It is truly inspiring to see them thrive and move on.

5. If you could tell our supporters one thing, what would it be?

That empowering children is crucial for the sustainability of a nation. When we invest in the education, wellbeing, and opportunities for young people, we are not only nurturing future leaders but also fostering a society that is resilient and capable of addressing the challenges of tomorrow.

This is an abridged version of the interview with Mulugeta. Find the full interview on our website.

**SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT –
LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY**

“I JUST WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT ETHIOPIA.”

Jennifer from New South Wales has been a dedicated supporter of Ethiopiaid for almost a decade. In this time, she has demonstrated a deep and heartfelt commitment to improving the lives of women and girls in Ethiopia.

Some years ago, Jennifer made the heartfelt decision to leave a gift in her Will to Ethiopiaid.

“I feel very strongly about the appalling situation of women in Ethiopia,” Jennifer says. “I don’t want it to continue. I want it to improve. Particularly now that aid has stopped from the U.S. which has caused a terrible crisis.”

“I hope that anything I can send can alleviate some of the distress of these women for whom I feel huge compassion and sympathy.”

Jennifer’s deep care for the women and children of Ethiopia is a testament to her personal values.

“I particularly want to see the position of women improve,” she says, about the legacy she is creating through a gift in her Will. “I just wish more people knew about Ethiopia. I hope more people are encouraged to donate.”

Like Jennifer, by remembering Ethiopiaid in your Will, you can help realise a future where poverty is no longer inherited – and where every person leads a life of dignity and opportunity.

For more information about gifts in Wills, we welcome you to call Adrien Baur, Partnerships Manager, at wills@ethiopiaid.org.au or (03) 9864 6060.



MEET OUR PROJECT PARTNERS



"We are helping human beings. We are supporting people who are suffering, people who are victims of political and economical problems."

ALEX

Project Partner: Yenege Tesfa (Hope for Tomorrow)

Yenege Tesfa provides orphans, vulnerable children, and single mothers with loving shelters, education, healthcare, and opportunities to break free of poverty and live a bright future.



"Caring for obstetric fistula patients is like giving their life back and restoring their dignity."



DR AMBAYE WELDEMICHAEL

Founder, Executive Director and Senior Fistula Surgeon

Project Partner: Hope of Light

Hope of Light provides surgical treatment and specialised care for women suffering from fistula, while also training medical staff and running community programs to raise awareness and prevention.



"To provide care, dignity & hope for the dying."

DR EPHREM ABATHUN

Executive Director

Project Partner: Hospice Ethiopia

The aim of Hospice Ethiopia is to improve the quality of life of patients with incurable diseases and support them and their families through provision of holistic palliative care services.



"Educating girls guarantees sustainable social change and is the best investment for human beings."



HELEN

Project Partner: For-ethiopia

For-ethiopia works to build healthy, educated, and self-sufficient rural communities, focusing on girls' education with support like safe spaces, school supplies, food, and life skills training.



"Making motherhood safer in Ethiopia"

MESELECH SEYOUM

Country Director

Project Partner: Healing Hands of Joy

Healing Hands of Joy works to prevent obstetric fistula by training survivors as Safe Motherhood Ambassadors. They educate pregnant women, identify those needing treatment, and support recovered women with reintegration and empowerment.



"Empowering communities to realise the rights and opportunities of children and youth, and helping them to reach their full potential."



MULUGETA GEBRU

Executive Director

Project Partner: JeCCDO

JeCCDO drives community-based development with a strong focus on children and youth. Their programs support education, health, sanitation, urban agriculture, women's empowerment, child protection, and opportunities that build brighter futures for young people.



"Where the road ends, APDA begins."

VALERIE BROWNING

Program Director and co-founder

Project Partner: APDA

For over 30 years, APDA has empowered Afar pastoralist communities through education, healthcare, emergency support, and efforts to end harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation and early marriage.

