



## Meet the grandfather turned anti-FGM campaigner

### You're protecting women and girls by empowering community leaders

**Idriss' journey is a powerful example of how you are helping put an end to female genital mutilation (FGM) in regions like Afar.**

The 70-year old grandfather from Awra, Afar recently attended a three-day clan leaders conference run by project partners, Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA). These conferences are designed to dispel common myths about FGM and train clan leaders how to identify and prosecute cases of the practice in their communities.

Before attending the conference, Idriss says his community lived a purely traditional herding life, with little information from the outside world. FGM was routinely performed on girls as many people believed it was required under Islam. Most men also believed a girl's place was at home doing housework and herding, not going to school and earning income.

Since attending the conference, Idriss says his eyes have been opened. It costs APDA just \$22.50 to train a clan leader like Idriss (or \$1,125 to run the full three-day conference) and it has remarkable impact. Idriss now sees FGM as against Islam, and therefore not good for girls or their families. He also believes girls should be given the opportunity to go to school and that housework should be shared equally.

“It makes for better social peace to see girls and boys as equals. We must protect the well-being of our girl children and by doing this we can better protect our whole community,” says Idriss.

**Hearts, minds and souls, this is the kind of impact you're having in the fight against FGM.**

## You are Eysa's greatest gift

### How your Christmas gift is breaking the FGM cycle

This past Christmas, you may remember hearing Eysa's story. At the time of writing, she was 18 years old and eight months' pregnant. She knew she faced higher risk of childbirth complications because of the FGM she experienced as a toddler and feared her baby would be subjected to this too if she was born a girl. Eysa was terrified.

Since then, we're delighted to tell you that Eysa has given birth safely to a beautiful, healthy baby daughter.

**Thanks to your Christmas giving**, not only are mum and bub **receiving post-natal care** from APDA's trained Women Extension Workers, but APDA have also **begun FGM education work** in Eysa's community to protect her newborn and stop this dangerous tradition for future generations.



Valerie Browning (left) with husband and APDA Co-Founder, Ismael Ali Gardo

### Sincerest thanks from Valerie Browning, Co-Founder of APDA:

“It's not just thanks I want to give you. I also want to congratulate you. You've done a tremendous amount for us, and we sincerely – every one of us in our organisation – thank you.

## Note from the CEO



### A message from Sharon

Putting together this edition of 'Selam', I can't help but reflect on the past 2020 year. On top of all the uncertainty and repercussions of COVID-19, Ethiopians have faced terrible floods, locust plagues and devastating conflict in the northern region of Tigray. It's been a challenging year.

But there is a silver lining. In the midst of these enormous challenges, you've been the catalyst for many inspiring things which have helped people across all of Ethiopia. I'm delighted to share some of these with you in this newsletter.

Please, take heart from this and from all the good you're doing for the most vulnerable in our world today. I am thankful every day to have you by our side.

Sharon Elliott  
CEO



*You helped Edna and her family survive the pandemic, even after her laundry washing business collapsed*

## Update on the crisis in Debre Berhan

### How you helped families like Edna's survive the pandemic

In mid-2020 we asked if you could help provide people like mother-of-three, Edna with the support they needed to get through the pandemic. COVID-19 had thrown her still-developing region of Debre Berhan, eastern Ethiopia, into crisis. Edna's home laundry washing business had collapsed and she was struggling to afford food for family.

**“I'm scared all the time. For my children. I'm scared we don't have enough food for them,” Edna told us.**

Even in your own tough times, you saw another's need and did something about it. Because of you, our project partners Jerusalem Children and Community Development Organisation (JeCCDO) were able to roll out a full-scale emergency intervention across Debre Berhan.

Thanks to you, Edna's family received:



#### Weekly food care packs

containing corn, flour, oil, cereal & powdered milk



#### 3-month supply of soap bars



#### 6x re-usable sanitary cloths

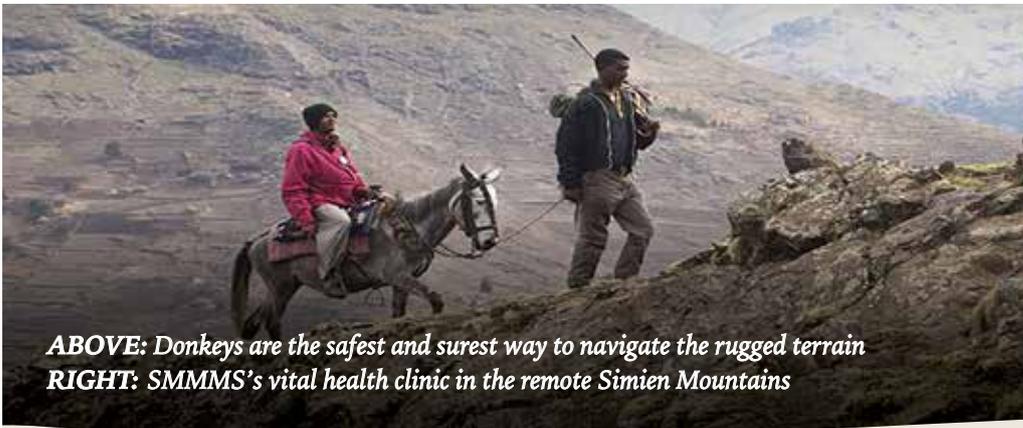
#### Micro-loan to cover 6 months' rent



JeCCDO are also working to future-proof Edna's community by developing the skills, knowledge and resources of local people so they can build up their resilience and independence, and lift themselves out of poverty now and into the future.

**“We prepared for everything. But we could never have prepared for this. This COVID-19 has hit Debre Berhan like a plague. To all who are reading: Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for your prayers, your support during this crisis. To know you are with us means we are not alone.**

Mr Mulugeta Gebru, JeCCDO Executive Director



**ABOVE:** Donkeys are the safest and surest way to navigate the rugged terrain  
**RIGHT:** SMMMS's vital health clinic in the remote Simien Mountains



# Donkeys to the rescue

Exciting new partnership made possible through you!

At the end of last year, Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Services (SMMMS) were facing a budget shortfall that threatened to put an end to their operations.

With the price of goods and services shooting up unexpectedly due to COVID-19, **they were struggling to buy medical supplies for their clinics, midwifery teams and mobile medical teams.**

Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Services provide vital medical services to remote villages in the mountainous Simien region, where lack of access to

essential healthcare remains a leading cause of preventable illness and death.

The team have come up with an ingenious way to navigate Simien's rugged terrain, where there are few roads and the infrastructure is poor: donkey ambulances!

In many areas these dependable animals have become the **safest way to transport pregnant women and sick people to hospital. The team also run their own rural health clinic**, which costs \$80 a day to outfit with on-call doctors, nurses, medicines,

medical equipment, sterilisers and bandages.

**Because of your ongoing generosity,** we were able to allocate extra budget and partner up with our Ethiopiaaid UK offices to cover SMMMS's funding shortfall.

**This would not have been possible without your faithful and dependable support. Just one more way you're bringing health and hope to people most in need!**

# Fistula survivor Embet says: "I am grateful for this chance"

Embet was just 20 years old when she developed a very complicated case of obstetric fistula while delivering her first child. It left her incontinent, abandoned by her husband and ashamed to leave her parents' home.

**But, thanks to the success of the long-term fistula awareness, prevention and treatment work that you've been funding over the years in northern Ethiopia, Embet's story quickly took a turn.**

She was soon identified by a travelling Safe Motherhood Ambassador and referred for treatment at Gondar Fistula Hospital. Normally, fistula

repair surgery costs about \$800, but it was 100% free for Embet thanks to your support of this program.

Still recovering in the hospital, Embet is looking forward to going home and re-joining her community with her head held high.

**“ I am anxious to go home with my family. It's been a long time to heal but I am grateful for this chance to start my new life,” she says.**

Thank you for giving her this chance.



*Embet and her baby girl recovering at Gondar Fistula Hospital*

## How one man's kindness will live on forever

John Robbins had a lifelong passion for helping children in developing nations.

When John passed away in 2020, the Robbins family felt the best way to honour him was to contribute to a cause he was passionate about.

Friends and family were invited to make a donation in his memory towards disaster relief in Ethiopia's Afar region, where many hundreds of families lost their homes, farms and livelihoods in mid-2020 to the worst floods in living history.

These gifts had an immediate impact and helped provide emergency food,

medical supplies and housing repairs to families in urgent need. Afar had a special place in John's heart, as it is where he and his family were building a kindergarten in memory of their beloved, pre-deceased wife and mother, Mollie.

John's values, and also those of his wife Mollie, will live on forever in the lives of all the Afar children and families they have reached; people who may never know them but who will always remember their kindness.

We dedicate this newsletter to John, Mollie and the Robbins family.



**ABOVE:** Severe flooding destroyed the homes and livelihoods of thousands

**BELOW:** This yellow mass isn't grass – it's a swarm of locusts tearing through vegetation



## Sharing the wombat love

A big cheer and thank you to everyone who wrote in a message of support via wombat this past Christmas!

We emailed the early responses to our project partners APDA to make sure they could have them in time for Christmas. We then posted the rest so the team could share them out with the women and children they work with in Afar. For many, it will be the first time they will have seen or heard of a wombat!

What a special way to reach out to others in our world. **Here are just a few of the many wonderful responses:**

"Keep safe, healthy and happy. Peace and love to you all!"

– Dr Hugh, Terranora NSW

"This message sends love and hope to you from 'Down Under' in Australia. This furry wombat lives underground and sends a gentle message of hope as well."

– George, Concord NSW

"Women support women. We are thinking of you even though we have never met and send our love."

– Fiona, Rivett ACT

"Best wishes and keep on doing your great work for girls and women! I have been told this is very difficult for you, and I applaud your determination. With love and best wishes."

– Marjorie, Batemans Bay NSW

"Dear friends far away! Sending you all best wishes this Christmas and a better life to come. May your future become bright and happy. Sending love and light!"

– Margareta, Bedford WA



Ways to make a donation

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