



Report December 2009 – March 2010

February 17, 2010

Dear Family, Friends and Supporters!

Time flies, and our children grow so quickly that we are admiring their development month by month. Therefore our project must grow with them, and we all, the co-workers of Positive Action Charity Organization, try to keep up. I am particularly glad about the progress of our big ones, the Grade 1 students; for example, Abdurahim, who in the beginning was quite behind the others and struggled with writing, now knows all the 231 letters of the Amharic alphabet and writes in beautiful script, and Asrat can put together words using the movable Amharic letters.

In the kindergarten, we are especially happy about the progress of Cheri and Mintesenot Teklu. Both of them were formerly disinterested in learning and therefore did not show many accomplishments, but now both are learning to read and write and are very happy when they have mastered a set of letters. Even our special care cases, Fikr and Helen, have adapted well; we follow up their health status most carefully, take them to a doctor quickly whenever necessary, and the good food and playing in the group – real learning is still beyond those tiny ones – makes them stronger and more cheerful every day.

As usual we had a drama in December: Mihiret Abrarew was burnt on her back by an accident at home. Since the burn wounds, thanks to God, were not too deep, after some time we gave responsibility for having her bandages changed to Mihiret's mother. Although she did not have to pay for the treatment at the Shashamane Health Center, the mother interrupted the treatment after about two weeks, did not send Mihiret back to school either, but let the still open wound on her back get dirty and infected. I found Mihiret four weeks later in the dust in front of the church, where her mother was showing the wound to people in order

to beg for money. It seems that she was very successful in this, for when I charged her to send the weakened child, who could hardly walk or sit upright, to school on Monday in order to receive further treatment, she refused.

In the meantime many people had gathered around us, and when they heard that Mihiret was taken care of by our project and did not have to beg in the streets, the people were very upset and insulted the mother. Eventually someone called the police; only at the police station Mihiret's mother agreed to let the child be treated on Monday. But when we came to pick her up, the mother started screaming that I was trying to steal her child, that I must not take her to a doctor, that she was her child and she had a right to use her for begging. I finally brought two men from the district administration, who know and have been supporting our project from the beginning, to Mihiret's house. When they saw the condition of the child, they decided to separate her from her mother by force and charged me to take her to a doctor. On the way to the clinic we passed by the police station in order to explain the situation; the policemen were equally shocked about the condition of the child – half of her back was completely open and infected – and permitted me to take Mihiret with me.

Because the mother had refused to let her be treated, it was impossible to let Mihiret go home after she had been bandaged. Doctor and nurse said that the girl had been only one step from getting gangrene and that strict hygiene was absolutely necessary until the wound had healed completely. So Mihiret came to stay with me; on the same day I quickly went to buy her a mattress, blankets and sheets as well as clothes, since she arrived at our house barefoot and dressed only in a dirty jacket and torn trousers. Apart from the practical challenges of taking in a fourth child, we also had to try to comfort and support a child who had been traumatized by her severe illness and the forced separation from her mother. In the beginning Mihiret was crying for her mother, but from day one on she enjoyed playing with the other children and was generally cheerful and, after about a week, seemed more balanced again.

In February we had some rain, which is very unusual for that time of the year, so we started planting up our garden. We first set up 10 large beds in the front, among them a nursery. A good friend of mine, Ras Makau, helped us in planting these and was supported by Sandra, a volunteer from Spain who stayed with us for 5 days and not only planted flowers and tomatoes and peppers with the children, but blessed us with her very pleasant company. At the same time my mother visited us once again; she took the photos for this report and advised the Grade 1 teacher, Mr. Jemal, on how to improve his teaching technique.

Last month we got a new child: Wondimageny, 2 years old and at the time of his arrival at our project weighing only 6.5 kg, is not, as we were first told, infected with HIV, but his mother died from AIDS a little while ago and he has no family left at all. The mother was mentally ill and could not look after her child properly, which is why he was so severely malnourished and his skin covered in scabies and fungal infections. Misa, our social worker, took him into her own house, changes his diapers, prepares extra milk and porridge for him in the evenings, and gives him lots of love. This has helped Wondimageny to become a very cute, loving and active child; he has gained more than two kilos already and learns to do new things every day. But of course it is not easy for Misa to have an infant in her home, and in the long run we will have to find another solution for our little orphan.

Another new activity at our project is income generation for some of the parents of our beneficiaries. We have been aware for a long time that most of our children's problems come from their parents, and that it is not easy for HIV positive, uneducated people to find work. We started this program by offering gardening work to two parents, with weekly payment. This has helped especially Tesfanesh's father Getachew, who had refused to take anti-retrovirals and as a result had gone down to 45 kg, to get his life in order a bit. This is important for us as well, because Tesfanesh's foster mother recently put her out of the house and now the girl has only her father to look after her. We were worried that, if Getachew does not manage to feed himself and his daughter, he would just run away and leave Tesfanesh. We hope to be able to expand the income generation program in the future, although this of course means additional costs and yet more responsibilities for myself.

Financial Report:

1. Accounts for the year 2009: Expenses totaled 271,001.17 birr (about 15,050 €) for the following items:

1	Renovation of the new project site	2,467.65
2	Transportation for children	21,908.00
3	Field trips	996.00
4	Teaching aids	15,081.20
5	Transportation for medical treatment	3,337.80
6	Medication and medical treatment	10,863.15

7	Hygiene articles	7,818.05
8	Bathroom towels etc.	1,488.00
9	Clothes	1,886.00
10	Food stuff	46,981.09
11	Cooking fuel	4,513.40
12	Kitchen equipment	5,385.26
13	Playground equipment	7,907.00
14	Office furniture	675.00
15	Classroom furniture	14,046.00
16	Bathroom furniture	198.00
17	Staff salaries	81,383.00
18	Electricity and water bills	906.00
19	Transportation for office staff	1,829.00
20	Rent for project site	35,250.00
21	Office stationery	3,051.65
22	Auditing	3,000.00
23	Tax on bank account interest	29.92
	Total	271,001.17

Our **income** amounted to **428,992.52 birr** (about **23,830 €**), the source of which are still exclusively our generous donors and sponsors. This positive balance has encouraged us to expand the project slowly but surely: in the long run a small orphanage seems to be absolutely necessary, and on top of that further programs to support the parents and expand the school are planned.

2. Financial report for the months January – March 2010:

We thank the following donors, who supported us with a total of **219,331,78 birr** (about **12.180 €**): Anonymous donors from the U.S.A., Mrs. Annie Conrbleet, Mr. Thomas Weiner, Ms. Joanne Heckett, Ms. Louisa Heckett, anonymous donor from Ethiopia, Mrs. Kirsten Borgert-Bühren, Ms. Maike Jürgensen, Mr. Hani from Sudan, and another anonymous donor from Ethiopia. Plus the many donors and sponsors from Austria who have supported our project since its humble beginnings.

We also thank Sis. Emma from Ireland and her family, who brought two huge suitcases full of teaching materials, toys, natural medicine and hygiene articles, as well as Dr. Christa Staudinger for bringing in numerous in kind donations, Mrs. Schwebler for the toys and Mrs. Laura and Ras Spaiké Lion for the clothes. A special thank you also to an anonymous donor from the U.S.A., who bought Montessori materials and multivitamins for our children.

Our expenses for the months January to March amounted to **61,327.76 birr** (about **3,400 €**). We used this money for the following items:

1.	Transportation for children	5,540.00
2.	Teaching materials	861.99
3.	Transportation for medical treatment	584.00
4.	Medicines and medical treatment	3,161.35
5.	Hygiene articles	3,031.03
6.	Clothes	324.00
7.	Food stuff	13,663.50
8.	Cooking fuel	2,507.00
9.	Kitchen equipment	1,424.50
10.	Playground equipment	56.00
11.	Classroom furniture	180.00
12.	Kitchen furniture	218.00
13.	Staff salaries	26,057.00
14.	Electricity and water bills	189.30
15.	Transportation for office staff	1,120.80
16.	Office stationery	2,205.80
17.	Income generation for parents	195.00
18.	Tax on bank account interest	8.49
19.	Total	61,327.76

With heartfelt greetings,

Isheba Tafari