

Ethiopian Trip

January 2020



UK Registered Charity No. 1110814

2nd January We travelled with Ethiopian Airlines direct from Manchester with just an hour's stopover in Brussels.

3rd January Arrived in Addis Ababa at 0630 to blue skies and sunshine, which was a welcome change from a dull and rainy Manchester. We took a taxi to the Ras Hotel where we were booked in for one night as we were flying to Lalibela the next day. After a short rest we met Tesfaye Tadesse, the Director of the Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy (ENAPAL) who updated us on the latest situation of the families rehoused by Building Hope in Dessie. Apparently all is going well and we were advised to get in touch with Samuel Dessie who is the South Wollo Project Coordinator and was highly recommended.

4th January Woke up to another beautiful morning which are cold and crisp but it soon warms up when the sun comes out. A taxi ride to the airport for our domestic flight to Lalibela. Fentaw, a former sponsored student met us at the Airport and arranged for our transport to the guesthouse. We spent the afternoon with Fentaw who was manning the First Aid Tent at the market with some fellow workers. It was fascinating to watch the world go by amongst the throng of visitors and pilgrims who had travelled here from all over Ethiopia. After his shift had finished we travelled by ambulance (transport was a problem due to the influx of thousands of visitors) to the house project funded by Building Hope for Fentaw's family. It comprises 3 large rooms and has beautiful views of the countryside

and was almost completed. The outdoor toilet and cooking area will be built soon and the costs will be met by the household.



5th January Woke up early to the sound of the cockerel that lived just outside our bedroom and after breakfast took advantage of the ambulance to take us to the house where Fentaw and his family are currently living. We met some of Fentaw's family who were visiting for Christmas and sat down to coffee, popcorn, toasted corn and a local beer which is made from honey. As Fentaw was due at the clinic we returned to the guesthouse and stayed with Fentaw's younger sister, Asfash, who works at the Fiker Juice House. They serve delicious smoothies Mango, Avocado, Papaya and Banana and we spent the rest of the afternoon crowd watching. An evening meal was taken at the Kana Restaurant where we both had stir fry chicken and a very tart lemon drink. It rained that night which was good as the area is bone dry.

6th January Christmas Eve. Veronique arranged with Plan International a visit to her sponsored child, Surafel who is now 17 years old. She sponsored him

since he was 6 years old. Veronique was greeted on arrival at the school by the headmaster, Surafel and his family, and the project coordinator from Plan International. Meskel Kibra Primary School where Surafel studies, was built by Plan International and it is located on the outskirts of Lalibela, 30mins walk from Surafel's house. Surafel likes Geography and History and enjoys playing football and supports Arsenal and Manchester United football teams. Surafel and his family live in a small chika (mud plastering) house in a remote village outside of Lalibela.

The next day Surafel, his mother and older sister came with the project coordinator to the Fiker Juice House to enjoy refreshments with us and they went to the market to buy some clothes for Surafel. It was an experience that Veronique will never forget.



We spent the afternoon in the juice bar as Fentaw was busy with medical emergencies. There were two fatalities and another critically injured, local Ethiopians who were on the mountain and fell. Later that day he returned with his fellow workers and we sat at the square having a beer. While we were there Fentaw was called to another emergency, this time a motorbike and car had collided which resulted in

casualties and then later we arranged to meet Kassa (one of our previously sponsored students) later that evening at the Lal Hotel. It was good to see Kassa again and hear how he is progressing. He is a tour guide and in demand especially for French visitors as he has a flair for languages and there are only 4 tour guides in Lalibela who can speak French.

7th January Christmas Day. Woken early again by the chanting and music from the churches. The pilgrims had been there praying all night. Ethiopia was of the earliest nations to adopt Christianity in the first half of the 4th Century. Most of the morning was spent watching the crowds leaving the churches all dressed up in their traditional costumes. We spent Christmas day with Fentaw's Mum and sisters and we had a lovely meal, injera and beef tibs cooked on the barbecue. As transport was a problem we walked back to the guesthouse which took an hour and was really interesting as we managed to see two of the eleven rock-hewn churches from the path. The rock-hewn churches date from the 7th to 13th Centuries and were declared World Heritage site in 1978.

8th January Boxing Day. Beautiful morning again so after breakfast we walked to The Abyssinia Lodge to take in the views and have a coffee. We arranged to visit the Ben Abeba Restaurant (featured on Channel 5 Ben Fogle New Lives in the Wild) for lunch so Fentaw arranged transport on a Bajaj which we took while he followed on his motorbike. We spent time chatting to Susan Aitchison (the part owner) and taking in the fantastic views. She recommended the goat stew and Susan had the pancake with Ethiopian honey, lemon and banana for pudding. The Belgium king and his family had visited the previous week so it was a great experience to be there. Susan Aitchison had left Scotland to visit Ethiopia to help set up a School but had not planned to stay for 9 years and build a restaurant.



We also spent time with the children and teachers at the Kindergarten school (3-6 years old) which has 4 classrooms for 220 children and we were taken to the canteen which was unused with no furniture due to lack of resources. The children are currently having lunch in classrooms. We were pleased to see that the school had toilets and washing facilities.

9th January We spent the morning saying our goodbyes and then off to the airport to catch our flight to Dessie via Addis Ababa. Hanyea from Beza for Women Community based Development Association was there to meet us in Kombulcha and transferred us to Dessie which was painstakingly slow due to narrow mountain roads and extremely slow traffic. Arrived at our accommodation to discover they had no water that day but electricity was on.



10th January We had breakfast in a coffee shop and then met Hanyea and Tilahun, the former headmaster for our visit to Tita School where we met the Deputy Headmaster and the Supervisor. The primary school has 892 pupils with 12 classrooms and is under resourced. The library and the science laboratory buildings are ill-equipped and in lack of books and equipment. We were pleased to see that the two blocks of toilets co-funded by Building Hope were well built and in good working order and pupils had access to handwashing facilities.

Hanyea is overseeing an organic vegetable patch at the School and is currently accessing seeds so they can start planting and teach the pupils how to grow vegetables. We then drove to Karagutu School and was reunited with the Headmaster who we have met on many occasions. We visited the library which was funded by Building Hope and Veronique was touched to see they still have the plaque displayed in memory of her brother. We also saw the newly constructed Kindergarten classrooms (they still need toilets for the small ones) The School has done very well and has come first in the Amhara region for achievement, which is down to the Headmaster and the assistance Building Hope has provided over the years.



We were invited by Samson Fekadu to meet his wife and new son at his wife's parent's house. We met Samson in 2005 when he helped build the Habitat for Humanity houses and have been in touch ever since. We were offered lunch by the family, beef stew and enjera (sourdough savoury pancake) and Susan had a long chat with his father in law who went to University in Aberystwyth, studying accountancy. All too soon we had to leave as Samson had to get back to his accountancy work at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC).

11th - 12th January After breakfast Hanyea met us to take Veronique to see the Tossa Community Development Project. The Charity was registered in 2018 and provides shelter, electricity, sanitation, school fees and uniforms to 110 destitute families. The land is given by the government and is located on the edge of Tossa Mountains. People have to walk 2.5kms to fetch water. Veronique met a mother with HIV who was mourning for her son (17-18 years old) who took his life as he was left in a state of hopeless despair, unable to support his family.

We arranged to meet Samuel Dessie in the afternoon to visit the ex-Leprosy community.

ENAPAL have built a new office on the site where we met members of the committee and we also noticed the plaque in honour of Kathryn Curran who raised so much money for the houses. The area has changed beyond recognition and they took us on a tour of the homeowners. Everyone was so pleased to see us and grateful for all that Building Hope has done to improve their lives. A few of the houses did need repairs but on the whole we were pleased to see how well they have settled in to their homes.



A little celebration was arranged for us, popcorn and coffee and Samuel mentioned that the way forward was to create income generating opportunities so they could support themselves better. A grinding machine was mentioned which costs 350.000 birr (£9K) but would provide employment for many of the community as they could grind their cereals for sale. A few of them with severe disabilities are still begging as they are unable to get jobs as there is still a stigma against Leprosy. On the positive side, the area is now desirable and the price of houses has considerably increased.



Awoke to fog, and after breakfast Hanyea picked us up to take us to a Water project on the outskirts of Dessie which provide water for the whole community and the animals. We went back to Beza office and she explained about the new online platform for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) part-funded by Wollo University and implemented by Beza which will benefit 5000 students and the wider community. The online platform will increase access to information and services on AYSRH. The fog was getting worse so we checked our flight to discover it had been cancelled and we were rebooked for the 18th January (our flight to Manchester was for the 16th).

13th- 14th January The following morning it was still very foggy but in the meantime we managed to get an alternative flight to travel the next day in the afternoon. We were hoping it would clear but after a few hours the weather had not changed so we decided not to chance it and travel by road instead.

Woke up to find it still a bit foggy but an improvement on previous days which was a relief as the road to Kombulcha is rather treacherous with winding roads and steep drops and not advisable to drive with reduced visibility.

We travelled to the town of Kemise where we stopped for breakfast and shortly after that the gear box started to play up but we managed to drive to the town of Shewa Robit where a spare part was found and repaired at the garage. We spent time at the local hotel and were entertained by tame Nyala Antelope which walked freely in the grounds. The scenery to Addis Ababa through the highlands is spectacular but it is a long journey and we finally arrived at our hotel at 7pm exhausted.

15th - 16th January After breakfast we were picked up by Sonia Pasqua's driver for a visit to Sara Cannizzaro Child Minders Association (SCCMA) where we met the Manager Berhane

Aberra and the Communications Officer, Giovanna Maria Pani. Unfortunately Sonia, the Founder of the children's centre was housebound with flu but we managed to see her before we flew back home. The Centre runs a daycare and Kindergarten school and provides clothing and meals to 3 to 6 year old children who are from extremely poor families and mostly from single mothers. The mothers are also offered cooking and housekeeping as well as sewing and embroidery training programmes. When the children reach school age they are still assisted and return to the centre after school for help with their homework, sporting events and given an evening meal. Medical help is also available if required and they continue to be supported well into adulthood. The charity is totally reliant on donations and offers sponsorships for the children.



We met our former sponsored student Nega's sister Christi, who invited us for lunch with his other sister Lasta. A lovely afternoon was spent catching up with all the news and meeting Lasta's little girl who was born since our last visit. Nega is in Stockholm with his wife and pursuing his career as a nurse.

We then departed for the Airport and caught the flight back to the UK. We left Ethiopia with a heavy heart and wish we had stayed for longer but thankful for the wonderful hospitality afforded to us throughout our travels. It was a very worthwhile couple of weeks and has given us food for thought on future projects with Building Hope.

There are many ways to support our work in Ethiopia

- You can donate or create your own fundraising page online and raise money for Building Hope or transfer money directly into our charity bank account.
<http://www.wonderful.org/charity/buildinghope>
National Westminster
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IBAN: GB44NWBK60201135611448
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- **Gift Aid** - If you pay income tax, capital gains or any other tax, you can increase the value of your donation by 25% - without costing you an extra penny. Building Hope simply claim back the tax you have already paid to the Inland Revenue.
- **Workplace Giving Scheme** - With Workplace Giving, you can make a regular donation to Building Hope directly through the payroll system. Contact your employer about the Workplace giving Scheme.
- **Give as You Live** - Sign up and discover how you can turn every purchase into a donation for us, at no cost to you.
<http://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/buildinghope>
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- **A gift in your will** - Leaving a gift to Building Hope is a way you can make a huge difference to people in Ethiopia. Do let us know if you are including Building Hope in your will so we can thank you and keep you in touch with our work. For a confidential chat please email us..

Contact us

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