



Worth living!

Abraham finds his vocation in the production of water filters – and countless people gain access to clean water as a result. Ermias’ ministry frees the traumatized to regain their confidence. In an environment ravaged by conflict, Mohamed helps give expression and value to a rich culture.

Life is much more than just surviving – this is what the project stories in Ethiopia show us. When reading, I am fascinated by the idea that life blossoms with the projects, both for those who are engaged in them and for the target groups.

By reading, supporting and walking along with us, you, dear reader, are part of these projects, part of these stories, part of the fact that in dreary situations space for hope is created and life becomes worth living. I hope that as you read, you will also feel some of the joy of life that flows in and through the projects presented.

Thank you for being part of PartnerAid.



Daniel Scheidegger,
Public Relations and
Medias

Ethiopia: a gift to the world and a potential on the brink

When Kaldi the shepherd noticed that his goats were dancing around like crazy every time they ate from a certain bush, he tried some of the red berries himself. And lo and behold – he began to dance himself. Thrilled by their effects, he told a monk about his discovery.

For the monk, it was an answer to prayer, as he always had trouble staying awake during the nightly prayer times. The monks learned to dry, roast and grind the berries to brew a tasty drink. Thus, over a thousand years ago, coffee began its triumphant march from the Ethiopian highlands. What would we miss without Ethiopia’s gift to the world!

Ethiopia, the historical Abyssinia, was the only African country never colonized. Until 1974, it was ruled by kings and emperors who considered themselves descendants of the legendary Queen of Sheba and the wise King Solomon. Haile Selassie, the last of them, was overthrown by a communist revolution. The country experienced an unprecedentedly brutal and bloody reign until rebels from Tigray province took power in the early 1990s.

Despite strong economic growth, the new rulers encountered resistance. To stay in power, they played the many different ethnic groups off against each other. In 2019, the tide turned: after uprisings, Abiy Ahmed from the Kaffa region – home to Kaldi and coffee – became the new prime minister. Abiy heralded a new era of freedom, tolerance, peace with Eritrea and eco-



omic recovery. The enthusiasm was great, and the hope even greater. But not everyone knew how to handle the new freedom. The ousted Tigray elite, ethnic nationalists and religious fanatics set out to settle old scores, carry out ethnic cleansing or seize power. A war in Tigray, bloody clashes between different peoples, war crimes, millions of refugees, and a traumatized nation are the sad results.

Ethiopia has incredible potential and an enormously challenging road ahead. Over half of the population of over 110 million is under the age of 15. A generation eager to learn, courageous

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Trauma-affected people receive therapy that is adapted to their needs.

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and creative, demanding its place. The country yearns for peace, prosperity and tranquillity. At the same time, the situation is fragile as rarely before. The possibility of civil war, disintegration of the country and economic collapse is real. Which side the situation will tip to, no one knows. This fascinating country with its wonderful people has so much more to offer the world than a drink.

Overcoming trauma: the amazing story of Ermias Kiros

From an Orthodox deacon to the founder of Fekat, a therapeutic centre that accompanies thousands of people with traumatic experiences on the path to healing: this is the story of Ermias.

Actually, Ermias had wanted to become a priest. Already as a child he loved the dignified and colourful traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. So he underwent training as a deacon. Due to his cheerful manner and his eloquence, he quickly became a nationally popular preacher. Films and CDs of his sermons were sold everywhere. Alongside this, he studied ethnology at university. After graduation, he found a job as a corporate consultant and coach. Here, too, a successful career seemed to be in store for him.

The turning point

Through contacts from his employer, he was able to attend a continuing education course on trauma debriefings. At a highly practical course in France, he learned to listen to people with post-traumatic disorders and to accompany them on the path to healing.

In Ethiopia, victims of bad experiences are rarely allowed to talk about them, let alone cry about them. "Don't be like that," they are told, "be grateful that you are still alive. Don't cry, just trust in God."

Ermias himself experienced it as enormously liberating to finally be able to talk and cry about his own experi-

ences. It did him good to hear that his grieving process and his questions were not unusual. He found courage to work holistically on his identity and took steps towards forgiveness and healing.

Passing on what you have learned

Enthusiastically, Ermias began debriefing people in his spare time. When he experienced how a woman could sleep for one night again after years or someone suddenly ventured out among people again or gave up his alcohol addiction, he decided to dedicate his life to the victims of trauma. He quit his job and studied psychology. Alongside this, he launched the Fekat Counselling Center, an organization that provides trauma debriefings and conducts trainings across the country to make this help available to a wide population. Many Muslims and atheists also participate in the program and gratefully forward the help to their friends and families.

Fekat has now grown into a network, with offshoots and therapists in all parts of the country. Thousands have been healed and hundreds have been trained.

Acute emergency

In the civil war in the north of the

country, Ermias and his team were able to conduct a workshop earlier this year. These are the words of one participant: "Before the workshop, I had asked God to end my life. I simply could no longer bear the pain and injustice that I and my people had experienced in the last six months of war. I was looking for a place where I could finally cry and vent my feelings. I was quite surprised at how relieved I was when I told my story. I felt calm, able to forgive the perpetrators and trust again that God will take care of the injustices in my area. I want to become a reconciling voice in my family, my church, and my region. Through this debriefing I was able to take very concrete steps into living with a healed heart."

It is of great concern to Ermias Kiros and Fekat to continue to offer their help free of charge, because the poor are often the most needy. In order to succeed, they are dependent on financial support.

Donation purpose:
Ethiopia, Trauma

Minch water filter for Ethiopia

By developing a new type of water filter that meets WHO standards, is manufactured in Ethiopia and sold commercially for less than 20 US dollars, a large part of Ethiopia's population is offered an affordable way to consume clean drinking water. After ten years, the company was relaunched this year. Associated with its history is Abraham, the deputy managing director.



Abraham – from cleaner to deputy managing director.



The relaunch of the Minch filter with the new design is imminent.

A message just reached us from the Whatsapp group “Spring Household Manufacturing – Product Shipment”: “Abraham, the Deputy Business Manager, is finalizing the price and terms with the Chinese metal processing company for the delivery of the mould needed to manufacture the Minch Household Water Filter in Ethiopia.”

The whole team of the newly established Ethiopian company is eagerly waiting for the relaunch with the new design. Unfortunately, after delays in the production of the mould, it will have to wait until September. However, the deaf craftsmen are working diligently to furnish the new production facility and the office is also taking shape.

After long administrative processes to re-register the company and the staff, the time has come to negotiate partnerships with marketing research institutes and aid organisations. The import of the mould and individual high quality raw materials not available on the Ethiopian market is in full swing.

From shoe shiner to deputy managing director

Abraham, the deputy executive director, has contributed a lot to making the project come this far with his tireless efforts. Once he was one of the begging children on Ethiopia's streets. One day, a passer-by gave him five birr (about 70 centimes). Back then, Abraham recalls, the birr still had a high value: “So I went to the supermarket and bought a shoe shine kit, even though I didn't know how to shine shoes.”

Thus Abraham rose from beggar to shoe shiner. The freshly purchased tool kit enabled him to earn enough money to support his mother and sister and pay his school fees. With his vigour and jobs as a night watchman, driver and errand boy, he made it to university where he was trained as an electrical and computer engineer.

Through his work with an American organisation, he came into contact with the British engineer of the Minch water filter. He immediately recognised his potential and offered him a job as pro-

duction manager and later as deputy manager.

As a reward for his hard work and tireless dedication to the team, he was awarded a share of the company. However, it is not his new title that makes Abraham proud: “My motivation does not come from money or title, because I do not earn much here. But we Ethiopians need access to clean water to stay healthy. When I can help people like this, I am satisfied and feel rich. Moreover, with this good team, I can continue to pursue my great passion for running. Soon I will become the first Ethiopian top athlete with engineering education.”

*Donation purpose:
Ethiopia, Minch Waterfilter*



The publishing house Ayana supports creative projects in Ethiopia.



Poetry promotes mutual respect and understanding.

Cultural creation for social development

Ayana was founded in 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as a literary publisher. Over the years, magazines in local languages for young adults have been produced. The publishing house produces online publications, various videos on development issues and a photo archive to ensure the preservation of literature and images respectively. The team at Ayana is thrilled to be able to support people in Ethiopia through creative projects.

Is art relevant in a developing country? Do people need cultural products? Yes, we believe that art and culture are not only for the wealthy and privileged. Even more so in areas where there is poverty, injustice and conflict, cultural expression can contribute to social development. That is why Ayana Me-

dia and Publishing works with Somalis in Ethiopia through creative projects whose concepts and meaning are rooted in local culture.

In many African societies, people have been exchanging ideas for generations through music, literature, events and images. This is how conflicts are resolved, messages are transmitted and knowledge is passed down. Example: in the Horn of Africa, poems have long been passed from clan to clan among the Somalis. Talented poets passed their long poems to others, who memorized them and recited them to another clan. Such exchanges allowed for the sharing of political ideologies, celebrations, and gratitude. Beginning in the 1970s, poems were recorded on cassette tapes and exchanged.

This example beautifully demonstrates that mutual respect and understanding has been fostered among Somalis for generations through poetry. Through a website and social media, Ayana facilitates a creative social exchange through articles, stories and poems on the online platform Dhugascho. On the one hand, contemporary texts are published, written by young authors and dealing with relevant topics such as identity, migration or social norms. On the other hand, Ayana also archives

oral traditions before they are lost forever. Ayana's literary expert Mohamed has travelled through Ethiopia, Somaliland and Djibouti to collect Somali poems, proverbs and stories from oral traditions and modern literature. Over 450 oral poems and 400 unpublished proverbs were thus archived.

In the eastern Ethiopian town of Jigjiga, Ayana organized the first public poetry competition. Many young women confidently recited their poems and the event was even broadcast on television. Due to this success, Ayana is planning more event projects and working on literature and film workshops. Ayana's dream is to link the rich understanding of traditional art and culture with contemporary forms of expression so that the new generations can also find ways to strengthen their knowledge, understanding and cohesion through creative expression.

*Donation purpose:
Ethiopia, Ayana*

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