



h² Empower Annual Report 2010

submitted by Helen Boxwill, Executive Director
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This was a dynamic year for h² Empower. We have accomplished a great many things from starting the building of the community library in Hosanna Ethiopia, getting three grants, supporting literacy in Burundi, sending almost 30,000 books to the Hadiya Zone, Ethiopia, and making two trips to Hosanna. We have achieved many of our goals and there is much more to do. Read below to learn about our accomplishments and challenges in 2010.

We are grateful for the support of so many friends and our beneficiaries. h² Empower is very happy to work with the Hosanna community to improve the quality of education for all and to provide resources to increase access to information in order that the people can gain knowledge, skills and ideas which they can use to develop their own projects and to solve their own problems in their context.

h² Empower goals:

1. To complete the building of a community library that will be available to the whole community as a resource for learning, studying, and gaining access to information. The library can be a community center, a place where families love to come and learn, a place where adults can improve their skills and experience family cultural events as well as a place where all can discover new ideas and find the joy of lifelong learning.
2. To provide books for this library and for schools throughout the Hadiya Zone. This includes books for primary, secondary, and tertiary school children to increase their reading skills, to gain knowledge of the curriculum, and to expand their horizons in learning new ideas and extending their ability to think and explore, create and solve problems. There are also reference books and books in many areas such as science, social studies, fiction and nonfiction.
3. To train teachers to improve their skills and to utilize the books and other resources to increase student learning. Learning would be enhanced by teachers' ability to adapt materials to meet the needs of the students and to provide materials that will support and stimulate learning.
4. To train librarians to keep a clean, well organized library, to maintain records and to become resources to teachers, students, and the community. The role of the librarian is not to be the guardian of the books but to be a resource for all to find

needed information, to provide programs where learning and cultural events can take place, to offer opportunities for the library community to explore independent interests and discover new learning on their own.

h² Empower Accomplishments in 2010:

1. Community Library

- a. The library is now under construction on the grounds of Alemu Woldehanna Primary School, the largest primary school in Hosanna Town. It is the only cement structure on the compound.
- b. It will contain a main reading hall, a computer room, a storage room, toilets, staff room, a newspaper/ magazine / study/ room, a small reading nook, and a large vestibule.
- c. The building was designed by the town engineers. A contractor, who signed a contract in our presence, won a competitive bid organized by the school and town engineering department.
- d. The parents have contributed a total of 70,000 Birr and are again collecting funds to contribute to the library. This continued support by the parents is a glowing example of our efforts to work with the community and demonstrates the value of our project to the direct recipients of our efforts.
- e. h² Empower wrote the grant proposal for the Alemu Woldehanna Primary School that won the US Ambassador's Self Help Grant of \$10,000 US for constructing the library by December 31, 2010.
- f. h² Empower has contributed \$14,000 US towards this building over the past 3 years.
- g. h² Empower won a grant from a US NGO, Be Free Global, for \$1000 for children's furniture and negotiated other furniture to be purchased by the International Foundation For Education and Self Help (IFESH).



2. Sending Books

During the past six years h² Empower has sent books to the Hosanna Teacher Training Colleges (HTTC) and four other TTC's throughout Ethiopia. In the past we have supplied books to 15 primary schools and 3 secondary schools, as well as the College of Tropical Medicine in Hosanna.

In 2010 the following was accomplished:

- a. Thirty thousand pounds of books were sent to schools in the Hadiya Zone, Ethiopia, shipped in November 2010.

- b. There is a steel container on its way to Hosanna from the US. Is to provide books for 48 institutions. There will be 9,000 books for the community library under construction and the rest go to primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary schools throughout rural Hadiya Zone and the Hosanna Hospital Library. Some of these schools are in very remote areas. Most schools will receive at least 400 books, giving them a start of a good collection. Some schools with extremely large populations will receive almost 2000 books.
- c. Newsday covered the story of organizing the shipping of the books with a feature article in its Sunday Part II section. This article resulted in many responses for more book donations. There also was an article on the Huntington Patch .com. See the articles on our website at <http://www.h2empower.org/press/>
- d. The day the books were shipped, 53 people were there to move all the books from the storage container to the container that was sent to Ethiopia. The 741 boxes of books had to be moved within 2 hours. With the coordinated efforts of students from 4 local high schools and 2 middle schools, board members, community members and friends. This was accomplished on a beautiful sunny November day.
- e. The Hadiya Development Corporation has agreed to empty the shipping container, call all the receiving schools to send a representative and conduct three days of training on how to organize the books, and how to use them. A memorandum of understanding will be signed by each school that they will take care of the books and ensure that the children have regular access to them. All costs will be covered by the Hadiya Development Association.
- f. Woldeamanuel Abiyo, our country representative, is tracking the container and processing all papers to facilitate its arrival. He is spending a great deal of time and effort to accomplish this work.



3. Teacher Training

Primary school teacher training has been continuous since 2003. Workshops were conducted at the HTTC on using the library, adapting available books to the curriculum, active learning methods to increase language development and continuous assessment. Training for 200 teachers was held in the School for the Deaf. Teachers were trained on how to use an encyclopedia, benefits and techniques in reading aloud to children, the variety of books available, how to choose books to support the curriculum and information on a variety of genre.

- a. One full day training was held February 2010 at Alemu Woldehanna Primary School for 150 primary school teachers, three school librarians, and four community members from the immediate cluster, a women's advocacy group and the town education department. The workshops covered Girls Empowerment, Environmental Studies, Health Care and First Aid, Questioning Techniques to Develop Higher Order Thinking Skills, and Exploring the Use of a Variety of Books for Classroom Use.
- b. This training was conducted by Flor Calero, Reading Teacher from Westbury, NY, Howard Dickerson, Agriculture Specialist from South Hampton, NY, Daniel Calisle, Health Care Union Supervisor from Bay Shore, NY, Mary Beth Guyther, former Board Member of Girls, Inc. from Greenlawn, NY, and Helen Boxwill, Executive Director of h² Empower.
- c. Teachers were separated by gender so that they would feel more comfortable speaking about gender issues. They rotated through five different classes. Teachers received a certification for professional development from the town education department.



4. Orphanage

- a. h² Empower has been giving guidance and support to an orphanage in Hosanna serving 28 children ages 3-15. These children's parents have died from HIV/AIDS. The children do not have the disease.
- b. In February five suitcases of warm clothes were brought to the orphanage from the US. All children received clothing and shoes. Recreational supplies such as books, crayons, puzzles were also donated.
- c. Meetings were held to facilitate the financial support of the orphanage by Perpetual Change, another not for profit organization in the US.



5. Touring Ethiopia

- a. February 2010 five Americans participated in a tour of Ethiopia combined with a volunteer opportunity to visit schools and conduct teacher training workshops.
- b. Historic sites visited included Lalibella, Awash National Park, Hawassa, Hosanna, and Addis Ababa.



- c. The tour, costing \$2,500, raised funds that covered the purchase of Ethiopian handicrafts used as fundraisers, while supporting artisans. The funds covered the cost of the trip for Helen Boxwill.

6. Programs in Burundi

- a. A Literacy Class was created to serve women who are enrolled in a microloan program in Bujumbura, Burundi. Many of the participants in the microloan program were illiterate. This limits their progress.
- b. h² Empower was awarded a grant by the UU Women's Federation Funding Program to run two classes, one in the north and one in the south of the city for one year. The students will learn reading, writing and mathematics, accounting for their business, and family planning.
- c. They will be supervised on the site of their business to ensure that they apply their learning to their work.



7. Special events in the United States

- Fundraisers and presentations were conducted throughout the year.
- a. Lectures accompanied by slide shows were conducted at a monthly meeting of the NAACP Huntington Branch, Westbury Rotary Club, Ethical Humanist Society in Garden City, Nassau Reading Council and First Congregational Unitarian Church of Harvard, Mass.
- b. School presentations were held at Smithtown High School West, Westbury High School, Accomsett Middle School, Plainview-Old Bethpage Elementary School. All of these schools held book drives and fundraisers after seeing the presentations.
- c. A dinner introduced community leaders to Fulgence Ndigijimana, the director of the literacy program and microloan program in Burundi.
- d. An online store was created through Karma411. This site sells Ethiopian handicrafts which support our work and supports artisans in Ethiopia. We raised \$975 during the Christmas season through the online store.



Groundbreaking ceremony Hosanna, Ethiopia



Children of Alemu Woldehanna Primary School

h² Empower Challenges:

1. The cost of the community library is continually rising because of the increasing cost of cement. Therefore,
 - a. Currently we need 220,000 birr to complete only the reading hall and reading room sections of the library. There are additional costs to complete the other sections. The parents and Kabele are collecting money but we will still need significant additional support to complete the building.
 - b. The school signed an agreement with the US Embassy to Ethiopia that the library be completed by December 31, 2010. Estimates indicate that the reading hall section can be completed by the end of January 2011 but only if there are funds to do the work.
 - c. Much more fundraising needs to be done to have enough money to complete construction and furnish the library.
2. While book distribution is planned and one day of training will be provided, history has shown that books have been locked or put away and that children never get to read them despite promises to put them in the hands of the children.
 - a. The librarians tend to have limited skills in library development and are merely custodians of the books.
 - b. Teachers do not encourage or demand access to the books.
 - c. Teachers do not understand how to incorporate books into the curriculum.
 - d. There is not a culture of reading for self knowledge and self development.
 - e. There is not an understanding of the power of reading to change lives.
 - f. There is no knowledge of the use of different kinds of books and how to find to find a rich variety of information from books that do not look like reference books.

h² Empower's Dreams for the Future:

1. It is our hope that the community library will be a vibrant center of learning, where adults, teachers and students can come to events, classes and activities, as well as to study and research.
 - a. The collection of books will include Hadiyna language materials and Amharic books, as well as English language books.
 - b. The library will have multimedia equipment so users can listen to tapes, or see a video with cinema or videos for instruction or entertainment.

- c. There will be a computer room with access to high speed internet so that individuals can access information to the outside world. Teachers and others will be trained in the use of the computer and be able to bring a class to the library, using computer projection to teach whole classes.
- d. There would be solar electricity to support the needs of the building.
- e. The library will be open in the evenings and on the weekends so community residents can take full benefit of all of its services.
- f. The library staff will be models of excellence in developing programs, outreach to the community, keeping resources in good condition.
- g. There are enough primary school books in the collection given to Alemu Wodlehanna School that there could be a donkey mobile regularly taking books to the rural areas. This would be modeled after one in Hawassa, run by Ethiopia Reads. Presently there are no funds for this.
- h. Teachers would become models of lifelong learners, demonstrating that they should love learning itself and not simply study to pass a test.
- i. Teachers would become readers and expand their own knowledge, interest and curiosity.
- j. We hope to provide one person who can start to work with teachers and the librarian at Alemu Woldehanna Primary School, acting as a coach and model, supporting teachers in their classroom, not just giving workshops. This may be possible through an IFESH volunteer.
- k. We dream that the Hadiya Zone will become a model for the country, where there will be a culture of reading, where librarians will be sources of all kinds of information, and where lifelong learning will lead to improvement in the lives of both children and adults.



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h²=hope x humanity, happiness x harmony, higher learning x health, heart x heritage, hard work x help
 h² Empower is a not for profit corporation (501c3).