



Ethiopian Education Fund Newsletter | Winter 2018

Dear Friends of the Ethiopian Education Fund,

Each year we make the trip to Ethiopia using our own funds. Each year we go with ambitious plans. So we set off in November to observe, engage, and connect. We wanted to visit all of our 40 students. **Yes, that's right...we were able to add 10 new primary and high school students**, chosen by the village Scholar's Committee, because of your help in making 2018 a great fundraising year. Please consider a monthly donation by visiting ethiopianeducationfund.org.

We were also bringing 100 menstruation kits to deliver to girls to help them stay in school every day of the month through our new partnership with Days for Girls (daysforgirls.org - see more below). We brought dictionaries for high school students and a few computers for our university engineering and accounting students. And we planned to visit our friends in the village of Chiri where it all began back in 2005.

We dreamed big, but each year it is Ethiopia that tells us what we can accomplish and what we need to let go of. Our 5-person team of Jeff, Annie, friend Gordon, beloved driver and EEF friend Baky, and our in-country manager Zelalem was stopped 40 miles from Chiri by protests. We waited 3 days, but the road did not open.

Ethiopia is thankfully emerging from decades of repressive measures. It is in a political transition with a new Prime Minister and new President. Half of the ministries are led by women including the Ministry of Defense. The Ethiopian people are hopeful about the reforms, but the fruits of freedom can lead to open protests. People are advocating for change that feels right for their region in a way that makes sense for them.

So we formed a Plan B. We arranged for a former student, Tsegaye, to make contact with the Chiri students, come to Addis Ababa to pick up the books and take them to the students and take the menstruation kits to another EEF graduate who is a nurse and ask her to distribute to girls in need.

We also adjusted our travel plans to meet with some of our university and college students who are studying outside of the area. We were able to check in with Eletu (engineering, Jimma



University), Berhanu (agriculture, Sodo College), and Tekalign (engineering, Arba Minch University). We had a wonderful adventure in the beautiful hills and valleys of southern Ethiopia driving over rough roads to connect with these students.

One highlight was giving a laptop to Tekalign. He was visibly moved and kept saying what a difference this would make in his studies. Jeff told him there were 100 people in the US who donate to the EEF so we can support him. He mentioned over and over how thankful he was. Later Tekalign shared with Baky on his drive back to his dorm that he thought EEF was a huge organization with lots of money, sort of like the United Nations. Tekalign shared with Baky that now that he knows that there are small group of caring people offering him support, he would work even harder in his studies to make them proud. We were touched by this feedback and want to be sure all our students know more about our dedicated donors.



More about Days for Girls

Days for Girls creates a sanitary kits for girls who cannot afford or may not have access to paper products. Little sewing circles around the country make these kits out of colorful flannel, easily washed and not obvious when hanging out to dry. They gave us 100 kits to take to Ethiopia! Tigist, our former student who is now a nurse in the town of Bonga, will help us form a strategy to distribute kits. She'll also gather feedback so we can develop an approach that is culturally sensitive and responds to the girls' needs. It is an exciting project and EEF is hoping the partnership will build more support for our girl students, helping to reduce absenteeism and improve their ability to succeed.

We would like to end with a message we recently received from Eletu, who speaks for all of our students when he said **“How are you? About me, I am fine. The existence of you, together with my health, keeps my well-being in place. Best wishes, Eletu.”**

If you want to see students like Eletu succeed, please consider a donation by going to www.ethiopianeducationfund.org and clicking on the “Donate” button. A subscription of \$30 per month (\$360 per year) supports a student in grade school and her family; \$40 per month (\$480 per year) supports a college or university student.

All the best from the EEF Board,

Annie, Jeff, Stephanie and Rochelle