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FERENGE ETHIOPIA

ProjectsAbroad

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Editor's Letter

Welcome to the July 2013 Projects Abroad Ethiopia newsletter. This newsletter aims to inform all our volunteers with news and information about the latest happenings in Projects Abroad Ethiopia.

Projects Abroad Ethiopia team is working hard to accommodate summer volunteers –which have great experience in Ethiopia. Thank you all the people who have volunteered with us – we really appreciate all for your valuable time and great help you gave at the different placements. And who decided to choose Ethiopia for volunteering through Projects Abroad.

Enjoy reading this issue and I hope that you will find something that you like. **Thanks to our volunteers who have shared their stories and photos with us.** We encourage everyone to join us in making the newsletter interesting and exciting by sending in your own written articles and pictures of your experiences here with us. Your stories and pictures will help others to understand and learn about Ethiopia. If you have anything you'd like to contribute, suggest, or comment on, please contact: bikeseegnhaileleul@projects-abroad.org

Enjoy!!!!



From the community to the community

By Mike Dickson – Journalism volunteer from Canada

The culmination of three months of instruction and 21 days of frantic work came to a head Wednesday night for the students of Practical International Leadership and Language School.

Every year, the graduating class of PILLS undertakes a project as part of their final evaluation for the programme, and given 21 days to complete it. The goal is to take the knowledge they have learned in the classroom and turn it into something concrete that benefits their community, emphasizing the 'Practical' focus of the school.

This year the class of 24 decided to build an audio-video recording studio for the Addis Ababa Fire and Emergency Services department, enabling them to create public service announcements regarding fire safety, awareness and prevention. Given a room that previously housed a small library, the team was given three weeks to fundraise, buy all the necessary materials with the proceeds and build a functional studio that will serve to empower and educate their community.



If that sounds like an outrageously short period of time, it is. The whole idea is to engage the students round-the-clock, forcing them to come up with creative ideas for materials and construction methods on a very slim budget, as they could not use any exterior funding apart from what money they raised themselves. The team sold candies, gum, chocolates and knick-knacks to fundraise for the project and managed to collect just over 100,000 birr. That's a lot of gum.

One of the people hawking gum on the streets of Addis Ababa was noted long-distance runner Ali Abdosh. Several people recognized him as he attempted to sell candies or T-shirts, and laughs were had at the graduation as he recounted some stories of peddling wares.

Despite the laughs, his presence emphasized the team-first mentality of the project. Everyone is expected to contribute in all facets of getting the job done, to use their skills to best benefit the group, and no one is above or below anyone else in status. Not even famous runners.

"Everybody worked equally to achieve our goal that you see here today," said Elias Hailu, who defended the project alongside his 23 classmates on Wednesday from PILLS. "We spent many sleepless nights working in this room, taking everything we learned in the school and putting it into practice. We are proud to turn this room over to the fire brigade. Now they have the means to create videos and announcements that will help keep our community safe."

For the final evaluation, a dozen evaluators were given scoring sheets and asked to rate the team on the quality of

their final product and ask questions about the preparations and division of labor associated with completing such a project in such a short time. The evaluations of projects done by students of PILLS are equivalent to defending a thesis at a university; students were grilled on details both big and small and defended their decisions and material choices well.

The students faced considerable difficulty in fundraising for a project that many in the community considered to be part of the responsibility (and budget) of the government. As a result, many spurned the students attempting to fundraise, an experience that taught the students about rejection and the need to persevere twice as hard in the face of adversity.



Building a professional-grade studio was originally slated to cost upwards of 1.4 million birr, a cost that any fire department would find difficult if not impossible to absorb, and consequently the project was refused. But with fundraising and come creative direction from their consultant, the team brought it in on time and on a budget of 100 000 birr, thanks to some unorthodox methods like using egg cartons on the roof as sound disruptors. The team was allowed to hire any number of professionals (out of the fundraising cache) to do tasks like dry walling or flooring, but in the end they hired only one consultant, freelance architect and civil engineer ElshadayeTsegaye.

“As the students work on this project, they learn to work with other people, to overcome challenges,” said Tsegaye. “Usually when someone asks you to create a studio in three weeks, you say it’s not possible. They proved that everything is possible if you give it the proper time, energy and dedication. It’s a big achievement.”

“Initially, I was supposed to be an evaluator for this project,” he said with a laugh. “Then they asked me for a few

pointers on the room layout, then I started to help them with some engineering information, and eventually they hired me as their consultant!”

This particular project has a very personal connection to the school. Several months ago nearing the day of graduation, one of the students’ siblings drowned in an accident. The emergency services were slow to arrive on the scene despite their absolute best efforts due to a shortage of personnel and lack of proper equipment.

Despite the profound heartache and loss the student was experiencing, they still got up on the stage to graduate from the school. That refusal to quit in the face of overwhelming hardship inspired this class to attack the root of the problem; educate the population so they are aware of dangers so the emergency personnel need never be called in the first place.

When the school began in 2004, for three months they had an enrollment of zero. One year later it was 12. As of 2013, the school boasts an enrollment of over 300 students. It’s a number that founder DejeneKasse hopes to build into something even bigger.

“My dream is to have a university that has the same service in a higher level of education. To have its own buildings, its own facilities, so that people can touch what they’ve learned. Sometimes what we learn and what we utilize in practice is very different and students get confused. Our goal is to bridge that gap in every way possible.”

“I feel very happy. I feel like I’m building the country, because whatever the students do is for the community and for themselves. They are building things that will be with the community for generations, and they are learning practical skills that they can use throughout their lives.”

Unlike so much of the learning that happens in universities that is confined to paper and theories alone, the practicality-oriented approach of PILLS aims to mirror life lessons that are often just as if not more valuable than what you learn in a book. Part of those lessons is taking the good with the bad, and taking it all in stride.



“I want to thank the community for supporting the students, and the ones not supporting the students as well,” said Kasse. “The ones who supported us helped the project to come alive, and the ones who

didn’t were actually teaching the students about motivation and rejection. Life is both ways, and everything is a learning experience.”

PHOTO GALARY

Addis Ababa by Rihanna's (one month care volunteer) View



Two Weeks Special Volunteers photos



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ITALY – ETHIOPIA 1 – 1

BY Roberto Elefante – Journalism volunteer from Italy



When you are sitting in a café at the Piazza sipping a foamy *macchiato* in front of the rationalist building of the Ethiopian Electric Company or that of the Ethiopian Airlines, you immediately perceive that Ethiopia and Italy have an especially close relationship. Names, food, even the architecture, all remind one of past colonial power.



Italy, a late comer among colonial powers, occupied Eritrea in 1890 and tried to do the same with Ethiopia, which, at the time was the only big independent country in Africa. But, unexpectedly, the Italian troops of General Oreste Baratieri were defeated by the army of the Emperor Menelik II in the battle of Adwa. It was the first time in history that an African country had won a big battle against a European colonial power and, according to the historian Henze, “..a fundamental turning point in Ethiopian history”.

Ethiopia remained independent until 1936 when the Italian fascist regime, which had seized power in 1922, decided to take its revenge for the defeat of Adwa. Mussolini's troops headed by the General De Bono, occupied the country (with the aid of chemical arms) which consequently became part of the Italian Empire. But only five years later, in 1941, Ethiopian patriot fighters with the help of the British Army liberated the country.

The Battle of Adwa and the victims of the terrible massacres carried out by the troops of the Marshal Graziani in retaliation against a failed attempt of assassination, are still in the memory of the Ethiopian people. The date of the Battle of Adwa (1st march) is a national holiday and the Ethiopians who perished during the Italian occupation are still remembered in the moving monument Yekatit 12, which is located in the city centre of Addis Ababa.

Visiting places, speaking to the people, going into a restaurant or bar, you discover a huge Italian heritage. Places like Piazza (it. piazza = square) or Merkato (it. mercato = market), or Casainchis (it. Casa INCIS from the former Italian institute which built the compound for Italian civil servants during the thirties) obviously are Italian names. Also in the architecture the Italian heritage in Addis is relevant. Some prestigious buildings in the Piazza and as well as the monumental cathedral of Saint George were all built by Italian architects. However, most of the Italian ties can be retrieved in Ethiopian food; and not only in the famous *macchiato* coffee (it. Caffé macchiato) you can find it in many cafés made with traditional Italian *espresso* machines. Pasta is largely eaten by the population and you can find *lasagne*, *pasta al forno*, *penne*, *spaghetti* (all perfect Italian names for different kinds of pastas) in many Ethiopian restaurants and homes, together with the famous *pizza*. To highlight the special relationship between Ethiopia and Italy is one common dish made by mixing injera with spaghetti and which is called locally, Ethio - Italian food. Finally you can find other Italian ties in the names like *machina* (it. macchina = car) and *aeroplano* (it. aereo = plane).

Even more unexpected than the heritage in names, food and architecture is the positive attitude the Ethiopian people have towards Italy and Italians nowadays. It seems that the generous Ethiopian people have forgiven the Italians for their colonial past and have kept only the good things the Italians brought to Africa. In fact, the community of Italians living in Ethiopia has been alive and economically active since then. And Italian institutions have supported the development of the country through projects of cooperation, business and infrastructure.

In my own personal experience, it almost seems that Italians are reserved a special positive treatment by the Ethiopian people. When you are asked “Where are you from?”, and your answer is “I’m Italian”, very often the person you are talking to becomes more interested in you than before. Many of them have a parent, a relative, a cousin who lives in Italy. Some of them have also actually lived in Italy for either a long or short period of time. A lot of them know some Italian phrases – i.e. “non c’è problema” (no problem) – or just single words. And even if they don’t have any relatives in Italy, if you are asked about Roberto Mancini or Mario Balotelli



Leaving aside the historical ties, Ethiopian and Italian people tend to have a good relationship maybe because they also share some of the same values: both place great importance on the family, they both love children and they are both very religious people (Italians less than they used to be, anyway). And, last but not least, they both share the same immense passion for football. That of football is certainly one the most unexpected similarities between Italians and Ethiopians. Italians love mainly their own league (the Serie A) and their own teams (Juventus Turin also gave the name to the most famous Italian meeting place in Addis the “Circolo Sportivo Italiano Juventus” = Italian sports club Juventus). But Ethiopians are often even more keen and up to date on that matter than Italians, including even Italian football, although they may especially be fond of English and Spanish football.

The common passion for football could be, maybe, an important tool for both Italians and Ethiopians to improve their mutual knowledge. In fact, Ethiopians know much more about Italy than Italians tend to believe even though their knowledge ought to be a bit more improved and up dated. On the contrary many Italians (in Italy) ignore almost everything about Ethiopia except that it is an African country and a former colony. It would be nice, for exemple, to organize a match between *gli azzurri* (the Italian national team) and the national team of Ethiopia in Addis. The Ethiopian people would have the chance to watch their team playing against one of the top world teams and Italian people would have the chance, through football, to get to know a little more about a country which has so many ties to their own country.