



Drought refugees waiting for entry to a camp in Ethiopia's Liben region.

Photo by Sisay Zerihun

Horn of Africa Crisis

TV newscasts and media reports have made Canadians aware of the drought in the Horn of Africa. Somalia is at the epicentre of the current drought, which is accurately described as the worst in over a generation. The drought has put 10.8 million people at risk. What is not so well known is that 4.5 million of those people (compared to 3.7 million in Somalia) are in Ethiopia.

The drought posed a particular challenge to **Partners in the Horn of Africa**. Emergency relief

is not the type of work we do, yet the need for immediate help was compelling and we knew from countless phone calls and inquiries that our donors wanted us to address the horrible dilemma. The **Partners'** board decided to donate \$200,000 to Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), a non-governmental organization with experience and a good track record in refugee assistance, and which is working at the main refugee camp in Ethiopia.

Partners also decided to set up a Sustainable Agricultural Fund to develop lasting solutions to food shortage issues. There are always going to be droughts in Ethiopia, and solutions to famine must involve ways of achieving food security into the future. Long-term, sustainable infrastructure projects are something **Partners** is familiar with...and that brings us to Oda Chefo.

A River Runs Through It (Oda Chefo)

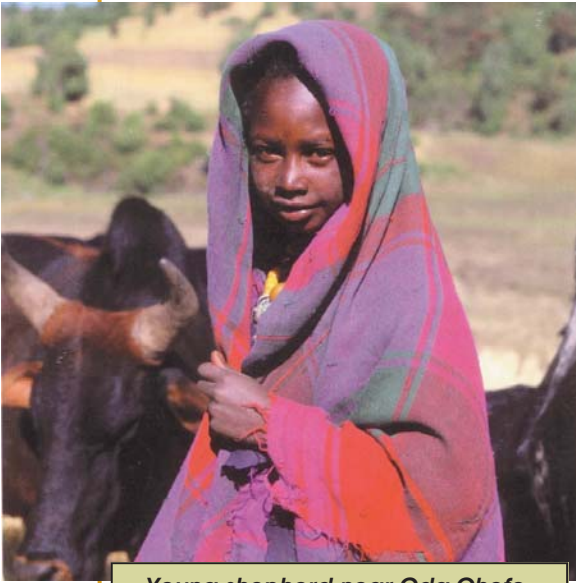
People can be forgiven for thinking that God might have forgotten about the people of Oda Chefo, a small community in the lowlands of Ethiopia adjacent to the Bale Mountain Range. Oda Chefo is 25 kms downhill from the bustling Bale Mountain town of Agarfa. People around Agarfa grow wheat. But there is little good land in Oda Chefo. The village is located in rugged topography, at the bottom of a deep valley gorge. The main farming area is a small strip of land on both sides of a river that runs through the community. The land has been seriously degraded by deforestation, high run-offs and increasingly frequent droughts. As one elder told us,

"We have witnessed droughts for many years in our lives. In the past goats used to usually survive droughts. This year's drought is unique. We did not have rain for 8 months and the bushes died and the goats died. We were shocked to see some of the old trees dying."

Over the years the average size of farms has diminished as fathers share the land with their children.

Partners in the Horn of Africa is addressing the problems of Ethiopia and follows two important principles:

- *100% of all donations go directly into projects in Ethiopia. Our Board members work voluntarily and cover all operating costs.*
- *Each project has an Ethiopian "partner" who contributes 15-20% of the project cost, usually in the form of labour.*



Young shepherd near Oda Chefo.

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"My father gave me around 3 hectares of land when I got married and became independent some 35 years back. Now I am left with less than half a hectare having shared with my seven children."

A river runs through Oda Chefo but the traditional irrigation system does not allow efficient use of the water. Diversion weirs and canals, made from local materials and dug from the soil, have to be reconstructed several times a year and are frequently damaged. Water moving along earthen canals seeps into the soil and is lost. Although the climate and soil could support citrus crops, farmers have had to plant crops that require less water and generate less income. Erratic rainfall and frequent droughts have made life in Oda Chefo difficult. Many children have to drop out of school, and girls marry very early

simply because their parents cannot afford to send them to school.

Partners in the Horn of Africa is now in the final stages of a feasibility study of a project that will transform Oda Chefo. The local river will be diverted into a canal conveyance and distribution system. Open masonry canals will transport a regular supply of water to 422 small local farms, approximately half a hectare in size and located on each side of the river.



Partners always requires a major contribution to a Project from local communities. At Oda Chefo local farmers will supply the rocks for the masonry canals and do the on-site labour under the supervision of contractors and engineers hired by **Partners**.

The estimated life of the scheme is 25 years. With a regular supply of water even a small farm in the warm Oda Chefo climate can produce very profitable citrus crops. Once completed, the people of Oda Chefo (presently on food relief) will be insulated from any further droughts.



Carrying Injera to a welcoming feast.

A huge hit with Ethiopian kids. Using a portable printer, Executive Director John Baigent gives them their photo.



The 7th Great Big Run for Africa

In 2004 Alison Moscrop traveled to Ethiopia to visit **Partners'** projects. She returned with vivid memories of the beauty and the challenges of this country - and of Ethiopians running early in the morning in the streets of Addis Ababa. Upon her return to Canada, Alison inspired her friends with passionate accounts of life in Ethiopia. Her passion proved to be contagious, and two of her friends, Crystal Flaman and Stephanie Moore, decided to run 100 kms (!!!) to raise awareness about and funds for **Partners in the Horn of Africa's** micro-finance programs. Supported by Alison and another friend, Nicole Rustad, Crystal and Stephanie embarked upon their harrowing "double-plus" marathon in freezing December temperatures.



A Great Big Run For Africa relay runner with an early morning Okanagan Lake view.

They ran for 14 hours, all the way from Enderby to Westbank. The rest is, as they say, history. The following year, the organizers converted the run into a relay event, thus allowing for greater participation. Last month the seventh annual run took place. It has become the signature event for **Partners** in the Okanagan and has raised more than \$120,000 for loans to the impoverished women who are benefiting from our micro-finance programs.

The Great Big Run is getting ever bigger (and longer). This year the main group of participants ran in a relay from West Kelowna to Enderby, while another group organized by Afke Zonderland ran from Mabel Lake to Enderby.

Development needs to happen within Ethiopia through the engagement of Ethiopian communities in the shaping of their own future. It is also important to raise awareness about and engage Canadians in the challenges faced by people in low-income countries. This means involving Canadians beyond the - albeit important - act of giving donations.

The Great Big Run stands out as a model of how Canadians can become engaged through an activity - running or walking - that is a necessity of life in Ethiopia where few people have any means of transportation other than their own legs and feet.

Good on you, Alison, Nicole, Crystal, Stephanie and Afke!



The Great Big Run helps fund Partners' micro-finance programs which typically enable women to start small businesses, like this fruit stand.

A Great Big Thank You to all of the runners, walkers, sponsors and donors. Together, we are making a difference.



Some of the runners from the 2011 Great Big Run on Oct 23rd, after being escorted into Enderby by the Enderby Volunteer Fire Department.



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Our mission is to improve the lives of Ethiopians. We listen to their needs and partner with them on projects that empower communities and individuals and contribute to their well being.

Our Board of Directors

- John Baigent
- Mekonen Bayssie
- Kirsten Behler
- Patricia Blocksom
- David Cosco
- Marguerite Jackson
- Rebecca Maurer
- John McAlpine
- Vince Ready
- Brooke Sundin

Moving? Please let us know your new address so we can keep in touch.

Email? Let us know if you prefer to receive your Newsletter by email.

Your donations are making a difference in the lives of many Ethiopians. On their behalf, we thank you.

We are a recognized Canadian charity and issue tax receipts for all donations.

Published courtesy of the members of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union, Local 1518



Sabine Lehr will take over as the Executive Director of **Partners in the Horn of Africa** in January 2012 and is presently in the Enderby office working as the Associate Executive Director. She was chosen for the position from over 100 applicants.

Sabine comes to **Partners** from the University of Victoria where she was an Instructor in the School of Public Administration, specializing in Community

Development, and prior to that a manager in the University's Office of International Affairs. Sabine also worked as a volunteer in Rwanda and in Europe with the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Sabine has visited Ethiopia on several occasions and has family ties to Ethiopia.

Sabine will replace John, who will chair the Board and continue to work on a part-time basis for **Partners**.

Partners in the Horn of Africa Director **Pat Blocksom**, a senior partner in the Calgary law firm of Dunphy Best Blocksom and a leading figure in the struggle for gender equality in the Canadian legal profession, was honoured last month with her induction into the Alberta Order of Excellence, the province's highest civilian accolade.

Pat is a regular visitor to Partners' projects in Ethiopia and at the time of her induction noted,

"Our world will never be fair or just for everyone unless we, who have the greatest understanding of human rights because we live with them every day, look beyond our country to ensure that other people have those same rights."



Director Pat Blocksom with an orphan at a Partners' Group Home.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
- Margaret Mead