

The Aysanew Kassa Trust

Improving Education in the Azezo Schools

NEWSLETTER

Education Ethiopia, Issue 14, December 2017

Registered Charity 1090931

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The newsletter of the Aysanew Kassa Trust, set up in memory of the late Aysanew Kassa by his wife Jean Bailey and friends.

The key activity of the Aysanew Kassa Trust (AKT) remains to help students in need, based mainly in Azezo, complete their education. This is done through sponsorship and the provision of educational resources. All AKT activities are carried out by volunteers in both the UK and in Azezo. Our website, www.aysanew.org, will help to keep you up to date!

Looking back and looking ahead

Our sponsored students:

This year, **15 of our students completed higher education** and are taking their first steps in the job market. The numbers completing their education each year is dependent not only on the students' ability but also the length of the degree that they are studying: a medical student, for example, will be at university for six years, while a nursing student will complete her/his studies in three. Since we were founded, **we have had more than 198 graduates:** congratulations to all of them! They have demonstrated that Aysan's vision is still relevant today.

Still on their educational journey, **19 out of 20 sponsored students** in Azezo High School have been successful in the year 12 exams and are entering various universities to study a wide range of subjects: well done to them! This means that in the coming year, the AKT will be **supporting 115 students in higher education**. In addition, **six blind and partially sighted children from St Raphael's school** have also gone on to university.

Azezo Senior High School:

Despite the growing number of schools in the Gondar region, the roll call at Azezo's Senior High School remains high, with 3100 students enrolled. The need for our assistance therefore remains and this year AKT is **helping 80 individual children**, equally split between girls and boys, coming from the poorest families. Each receives a small monthly allowance for books and stationery and we buy them a school uniform. At the school, we have provided support in the provision of IT classes, library books and sports equipment, as well as the construction of additional toilets. This has all been possible with your donations: thank you.



Break time at the High School

Atse Fasile Elementary School:

We **purchased additional furniture for the kindergarten, along with textbooks** to help improve the infrastructure in this needy school of 2000 children. Unfortunately, on Jean's visit this year, they were awaiting the appointment of a new

school director, but we did have some discussions with the deputy concerning the school's achievements and needs.

St Raphael's School for Blind and Partially-sighted Children:

In classes spanning the whole spectrum from kindergarten to grade 12, there are 72 children at St Raphael's. The new computer room, which we started work on last year, has been a welcome addition in 2017 and, thanks to the Gondar (Ethiopia) Eye Surgery (set up by the late Sandy Holt Wilson), **the provision of further laptops, IT accessories and taught classes** are well underway. Many of the children remember Sandy's last visit and thank his wife and the trustees of GEES for their generosity. We believe this focus on



Homework at St Raphael's

IT to be extremely important in helping equip the children with the skills they need in this modern world, as well as providing them with a valuable tool to assist their current learning.

We have an extra shipping container at the school, whose refurbishment will cost approximately £1000: when completed, it will provide additional study space, especially for the final year students.

Azezo Circus and Gymnastic Group

This enterprising group continues to perform and gives opportunities to both boys and girls. This year, however, it was noted that all the girls have now moved on to higher education! So they are currently searching for the next generation of female gymnasts. Whenever and wherever they train, a little audience joins them and, judging by the performance they gave Jean, for good reason!



The circus group in performance

UK Activities

As well as our work in Ethiopia, the AKT aims to **raise awareness of Ethiopian culture and history** in the UK (and, of course, raise money for our educational projects in Azezo!). This year, that has involved a lot of eating! In May, Tessa hosted **a superb Ethiopian lunch** at her house, all prepared by Egyi, who was a star! This was followed by another event at the **CLINK restaurant at Styal prison** near Manchester, where 40 guests had a fascinating experience as well as an amazing lunch. These events helped to raise much needed funds: thank you to all those who joined us!

Once again, we had a great day in incredible heat at the **British London 10K**, all of our runners completing the course in under an hour! A wonderful feat as the temperature reach a very non-British 28C! Thank you to all the team, be they runners, supporters or sponsors.



Our runners are rather "tanned"...

Jean has also thoroughly enjoyed going to talk to various groups at the Wednesday Club at St Barnabas' church and we thank them for their generosity.

Some good news and bad news

Melash, who you may recall from previous newsletters, is Aysan's cousin and our extremely reliable and wonderful team member in Azezo, without whom we would not be able to achieve what we do. His wife gave birth to their second child, a boy, but Melash suffered a huge tragedy a week later in October when Arega, his elder brother, a farmer, was killed in the countryside leaving a wife and four children, the eldest being a grade 12 student. Our thoughts and prayers are with the whole family. May Arega rest in peace.

Please support our students

This year was extremely challenging for the AKT: the falling strength of the £ due to the Brexit situation meant that we had to be extra cautious with all our activities. At the same time, the Ethiopian government devalued the Birr, making commodities, including food and transport, very expensive. Two of our long-standing donors have also very sadly passed away and our thoughts are with them and their families too. But, once again, our students have done us proud and shown us what they can do with just a little help.



We continue to look for new ways of supporting, with your help, the children of Azezo, enabling them to complete their education, become self-sufficient and contribute to their local communities.

If you have any ideas, please do call us! Also, if you have any books or equipment that might be of use to the schools we support, you can send them in small packets (less than 2kg) directly to:

Atse Fasile School, PO BOX 58, Azezo, Gondar, Ethiopia
St Raphael's Boarding School for Blind and Partially sighted children, PO BOX 1518, Gondar, Ethiopia.

We also can help you by giving you gift ideas for those friends and family members who seem to have everything! What about a football for a blind child (£16), school books (£15) or transport and a monthly allowance for a university student for a year (£70)?



Youngsters in the Ethiopian highlands

Thank you!

Without the time generously given by our volunteer trustees, the AKT could not have achieved so much over the last year. Our thanks therefore go both to them and to our volunteer committee in Azezo, led by Melash and Eshete, who, despite very busy jobs, give of their time freely and also



Bottling the bubbly stuff!

warmly welcome any UK supporters if they visit Azezo! They coordinate all the AKT activities and prepare all the accounts for Jean and the other trustees when they visit.

Our donors are too many to mention individually but you regularly give generously, so thank you to you all! A special thanks, though, to St Mary's Church, Wilshaw; the parishioners of St Mary's Catholic Church, East Finchley; the Gondar (Ethiopia) Eye Surgery; and the Rossi family in Italy for raising money for us as they bottled their Prosecco! Thanks also to our friends who donate from the USA. We continue to collaborate where possible with other agencies and we thank them for all their support.

Contact us!

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Donations can be made by cheque, payable to The Aysanew Kassa Trust, or by bank transfer (account number 80808350; sort code 20-58-51). If you wish to Gift Aid your donation, please complete the Gift Aid declaration, thus increasing the value of your gift!

Thank you for making a difference to so many lives!

Where is Azezo? Azezo is a town situated about 10km south of the city of Gondar, famed for its enclosure of 17th century castles. However, the huge population growth, with over 50% under the age of 15, means that Gondar and Azezo are slowly merging into one!

