

The Aysanew Kassa Trust

Improving Education in Azezo, Ethiopia

NEWSLETTER

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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 Aysanew Kassa Trust's primary goal is to support the education of the poorest and most disadvantaged children in Azezo (Ethiopia). This is done by sponsoring students and funding projects aimed at improving the provision of education in local schools. You can find out more at www.aysanew.org

Our activities in Ethiopia

This last year took the number of graduates funded by the AKT to 2012 since we were founded in 2000. But neither we nor our current crop of students will be resting on any laurels! This academic year, we are **sponsoring 127 students in higher education**, among whom we are pleased to count eight blind or partially-sighted children from St Raphael's school.

Hopefully also on their way to university are some **80 children**, equally split between boys and girls, **who we are sponsoring** at Azezo Senior High School.

A **shipping container at St Raphael's school has been fully refurbished** and turned into a wonderful new study space. This was much needed, as there are now 73 children at the home, ranging from kindergarten age to Grade 12. Funds for this project were raised by the annual *imbottigliamento* (bottling of the prosecco) that takes place in Italy, so many thanks to the Rossi family!

In the year to come, we hope to assist with the **construction of new toilets** for the approximately 200 kindergarten students who attend Atse Fasile Elementary School. Further projects will be discussed at our November trustee meeting, when we will approve the budget for the year to come, so keep an eye on our website for further updates.

In today's interconnected world, knowledge of computers is hugely important not only within the job market but also as a means of accessing a wide range of resources during a pupil's studies. We have used some of your donations to help **provide computing classes at Azezo Senior High School** and, thanks to Gondar (Ethiopia) Eye Surgery (GEES), its trustees and the wife of the late Sandy Holt Wilson, we have been able to **purchase further laptops for St Raphael's school for blind and partially-sighted children** and **continue a series of taught classes** for its students.

Every year, the **Azezo Circus & Gymnastics group** performs in the Azezo dust for Jean. They are still trying to attract more girls to train up for the Ethiopian team: we welcome suggestions as to how we can best support them.



Photos from around Azezo!

Outside Ethiopia

Our educational activities are not only limited to Ethiopia! The AKT has always aimed to raise awareness of Ethiopian culture and history. This is achieved mainly through talks given by our Chair, Jean; and, like last year, one of our trustees, Tessa, **hosted a superb lunch**, cooked by the excellent Egy!



The **British 10K** this year saw temperatures of over 30C, as we basked in a heat wave: congratulations to all the runners (especially Hannah, who had never run before!) and thank you to their sponsors. If you would like to run for us in 2019, please get in touch!



Ethiopia and Eritrea

It has been a year of momentous change in Ethiopia under the stewardship of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the son of a Christian Orthodox mother and Muslim father, who took over on 2 April following the resignation of Hailemariam Dessalegn. The last few years have seen much unrest in the country, with numerous, often violent, protests. However, since taking power, Ahmed has instituted a broad range of economic and political reforms, including releasing thousands of political prisoners. Most amazing of all, though, is the ending of 20 years of conflict with neighbouring Eritrea.

War between the two broke out on 6 May 1998 and, although a peace agreement was signed in December 2000, the border remained closed. The two countries, with a huge shared history and culture, remained frozen in a limbo world of 'no war, no peace'. People who had been visiting friends or relatives across the border on that fateful May 1998 remained trapped on the wrong side, torn from their families and homes. For over 20 years.

On 8 July 2018, Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afwerki, President of Eritrea, met in Asmara and signed a joint declaration that re-established relations between the two countries. On 18 July, Ethiopian Airlines flight ET0312 took off from Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, destination Asmara; and on 11 September, on New Year's day for both countries, the border crossings at Debay Sima – Burre and Serha – Zalambessa were opened, prompting jubilant and emotional scenes as families reunited. We hope for growing peace, prosperity and collaboration between the two countries in 2019.

"From this time on, war is not an option for the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia. What we need now is love."

Abiy Ahmed

Here are a few Christmas and Birthday gift ideas for you!

What about a complete set of school text books (£15), a football for a blind child at St Raphael's (£16) or sponsoring a university student for one year (£70, including transport and a monthly allowance)?

If you are interested, please get in touch and we can send you a card to give to the lucky recipient!



Please support us!

The continuing uncertainty around the sterling, and the potential impact of Brexit, coupled with the increasing cost of basic commodities in Ethiopia, suggests that 2019 will be tough for the AKT. We will not, however, be reducing the support we give our students and we continue to look for ways to collaborate with the local schools in Azezo, for the benefit of all its young people. If you can help us in any way, or have any suggestions, please let us know: the students of Azezo will be immensely grateful.

Other news

Azezo and Gondar have lost a true friend: **Nick Grant**—a generous, thoughtful and charming friend—passed away just as this newsletter was going to the printers. Nick did so much charity work on behalf of many disadvantaged people. He helped to fund the Ploughshare Women Crafts Training Centre in Woleka and, following Aysan's death, helped Jean to register the AKT as a charity in the UK. Despite his failing health, he continued to financially support AKT projects in Azezo. We will greatly miss his advice and our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this sad time.

You may recall from last year's newsletter the tragedy that befell **Melash's brother**. Well, his eldest son, despite the huge trauma, achieved great grades in his year twelve national exams and has entered Debarq University. An achievement that his late father, who never had the chance to go to school but had promised Jean many years ago would be given to his children, would be immensely proud of.

This year another of AKT's sponsored students, **Antenhe Lakew**, who is now an engineer, has started to sponsor one student per year for AKT. In his own words, 'this is now my pay-back time'.

In further sad news, as Jean was leaving Azezo in January she received the sad news of the death of **Senait Tefera** in the USA, an old friend of Aysan's and a huge long-time supporter of our work. Our thoughts and prayers go to her husband Abate and son Bruck. May she rest in peace.

Thank you!

The successes of the AKT are thanks to the many individuals and groups who support our work, as well as the coordinating efforts of our volunteer committee in Azezo, led by Melash and Eshete. Thank you to St Mary's Church (Wilshaw), the parishioners of St Mary's (East Finchley), the Gondar (Ethiopia) Eye Surgery and all of you who donate and assist us from all around the world.

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 are able to Gift Aid your donation, please complete the Gift Aid declaration, thus increasing the value of your gift at no extra cost to yourself.

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