



Open Way

helping people out of poverty

Registered charity 1122055

Annual Update - January 2024



Newly constructed Tula school

Introduction

We are very happy to report on another completed year of activities in Ethiopia.

The last two years have seen many ethnic tensions in the country, and these have led to chaotic circumstances in several regions. Violence even reached Addis Ababa last year and large numbers of people had their houses demolished due to ethnic conflict and were displaced into makeshift camps. Open Way responded to the situation in a small way at one of these camps in Debre Birhan with distribution of food and blankets.

Travel between Addis Ababa and Sidamo, our project area, also remains dangerous.

Thankfully, the situation in the Sidamo region, where Open Way works itself, has been peaceful and the main problem continues to be food insecurity aggravated by very high inflation. Open Way has targeted this by providing emergency grain and seedlings, by building houses, providing access to medical help, and providing education through its pre-schools. Business training for vulnerable rural people has also been provided with the aim of helping people find a way to improve their situation.

We would like to pass a very **BIG THANK YOU!** to all Open Way's supporters and hope you enjoy reading about all the work done over the last year.

Education project

Open Way's educational project has developed this year with the building of two new schools which were constructed last summer in the remote villages of Babe Colmocha and Tula Hiricha. The finished Tula Hiricha school is shown in the photo at the start of the update.



Babe school under construction (left) and now in use (right)

For the previous academic year (2022-23), there was a strong increase in demand, and we found ourselves taking on more students than we could accommodate, so we provided three extra teachers in rented rooms to cover the extra demand at Shigesho and Lela Wemerera. To improve this situation, purpose-built classrooms were built for these additional classes in the summer ready for the start of the current academic year.

Three new school libraries have also been built at Kokosa, Bentibata and Mi-ke. These serve as versatile spaces where students can study, read, and enjoy games during the school day. In the evenings, they take on another role by transforming into community centres where locals gather to watch the news on solar-powered televisions. This is very popular and provides a great connecting point for the community.

These school developments mean that nearly 2,000 children have been able to register in Open Way pre-schools and have started their first step in education this current academic year. This provides employment for 36 teachers and eight librarians.

School	Classes in 2023-2024	Schools with libraries
Shigesho	8	✓
T-K	5	✓
L. Wemerera	4	✓
Lela Honcho	3	✓
Hatabo	3	✓
Kokosa	3	✓
Mi-ke	2	✓
Bentibata	2	✓
Babe Colmocha	3	
Tula Hiricha	3	
	36	8

Total number of students	1,910
Number of girls	980
Number of boys	910

The district Ministry of Education has granted Open Way schools an official seal meaning that students who pass through our pre-schools will have a legal stamp certifying that they have passed the year and can then move smoothly into government schools.

Teachers who have worked at Open Way schools can also be certificated. Many of them pass on to new jobs in government schools, so their experience at Open Way schools provides a great opportunity.



Exercise books being handed out to Open Way students

After teachers flagged up the fact that some children had clothes that were literally falling to pieces, we found it important to purchase clothes for these children. The teachers helped select 80 students in need of clothes.

Tackling food insecurity

Grain

Once again, food insecurity has dominated the use of Open Way's resources because of inflation, general instability country-wide, and erratic weather conditions. This makes life very difficult for the extremely poor, pushing more and more people from subsistence into desperation.

To put the situation in some kind of perspective, the grain we supply is pretty much the only food the family has other than any vegetables they may be able to grow like, for example, cabbage. Naturally, things are a bit better at harvest times and in the coffee picking season when people can earn a little money, but families don't even imagine having items that we might consider "basics" like milk or sugar. Malnourishment is, therefore, very widespread.

Over the twelve months leading up to July 2023, we distributed about 32 tonnes of grain and over the subsequent twelve months we are on course to distribute about 78 tonnes of grain.

This grain is distributed in monthly rations of 15 kg. The beneficiaries are extremely vulnerable families in the community. The majority are families of children at Open Way pre-schools or are referred to us by health centers or hospitals because of severe malnourishment.



Grain (fine maize flour) being distributed at the mill

Sustainable Support

Seedlings

For many years, we have provided seedlings to a number of families who have a plot to plant them. False banana is a staple food in Ethiopia and is helpful to improve food security for the following reasons:

- They can be planted at any time and propagated from cuttings.
- They are drought resistant (their growth pauses during drought).
- The flesh is nutritious and energy rich (making a staple called “kocho”).
- The root can be used as animal feed or even emergency human food.
- The leaves of false banana plants can be used for animal feed or other uses.

False banana seedlings were distributed to 484 families in 2023 and we will be distributing to a similar number this year as the seedlings come to the market later in April.



Maturing false banana plants

Income generation and business training

During last year the team in Ethiopia have been working on the development of a small rural farm for income generation, so Open Way now has three dairy cows, and a small chicken farm in the village of TK.



One of Open Way's new cows

As well as income generation, the farm has a double purpose and will be used to help poor rural villagers start their own small-scale businesses.

In September, Mulu gave a four-day training workshop for 500 poor people selected from the local villages. The training included practical advice on getting out of poverty including how to manage money, how to build a small business, as well as tackling cultural attitudes towards poverty (such as the idea that poverty is God-given and that there is nothing that can be done about it). People were very inspired by the workshop and said that they had never received such a lesson. All the attendees left feeling they now had some tools to improve their situation.



Business training sessions

On the last day of the workshop, Open Way's farm manager gave some practical training on handling and looking after chickens, their health, their food and how to build a chicken run. After the training, attendees who successfully prepared a chicken run were given two young chickens to raise for profit.



Chicken distribution

Providing Housing

This very simple project provides a simple traditional house with a metal roof for people that are vulnerable and living in unsafe dwellings. This provides security, protection from the weather and from hyenas and makes a huge difference to people's lives.

This project also provides a lot of employment opportunities for local construction teams in the different villages.

Open Way continues to construct about 20 houses per year.



A house under construction



A house after the mud-work is complete

Providing access to medical help

In the period August 22 to July 23, 202 patients received medical help thanks to Open Way paying for: cost of transport to clinics and hospitals; registration fees; medicines and tests, and food and accommodation when needed. These are people that otherwise would not have the means to get medical help. The treatments can vary from very simple to very serious cases which may even be referred to Addis Ababa hospitals on occasion. This coming year (August 23 - July 24) we hope to help a similar number.

A total of 202 patients were treated for the conditions in the table. Of these, 112 were female, 90 were male, and 29 were children.

Condition	No. of cases	Condition	No. of cases
Anaemia	6	Kidney issues	18
Asthma	7	Liver issues	3
Brain tumour	1	Lung issues	10
Breast issue	2	Malaria	2
Cancer	2	Mental health	1
Cataracts	52	Nerve issues	1
Depression	1	Pneumonia	5
Diabetes	2	Prostate	7
Diarrhea	1	Skin	4
Epilepsy	2	Stomach issues	1
Eye issues	3	Swelling	5
Fistula	1	TB	8
Gastritis	7	Typhoid / typhus	44
Giardia	1	Unknown	2
Glaucoma	17	Womb	6
Heart issues	3	Worms	11
HBP	2	Wounds	5
Hyena wound	1	Total	244*

** The total number of medical cases is larger than the number of patients because some patients had more than one medical problem.*

Helping the Elderly

For many years, Open Way has been helping about 16 elderly rural people in the project area who have no other support from anyone else. This includes clothing, soap, and blankets when needed and a little bit of money. They also receive monthly grain.

This makes a big difference, allowing them to live their final years with dignity.

