

Dining for Women

Interim Progress Report: July 31, 2016

I. Background Information

1. **Organization Name:** Visions Global Empowerment
2. **Program Title:** Empowering At-Risk Deaf Women & Girls in Ethiopia through Education, Mentorship, and Livelihoods Development
3. **Grant Amount:** \$46,728
4. **Contact Person:** Gregory T. Buie, *Executive Director & Co-Founder*
5. **Address:** 1621 Barry Avenue #PH1, Los Angeles, CA 90025

II. Overview of Stated Program Activities & Outcomes

The following list encompasses the originally stated objectives & outcomes of our grant proposal:

1. **Livelihoods Development:** To provide vital vocational training opportunities and livelihoods development assistance to 40 deaf women in Addis Ababa (20) and Bahir Dar (20) with the goal of ensuring each has a job or trade by the end of the program that promotes independent living and economic independence.

Update: Initial assessments were done by our local partners in both Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar in collaboration with community leaders, governmental authorities, and known networks of unemployed or under-employed Deaf women. Following several weeks of screening, validating information, and interviews, a batch of 20 Deaf women were selected in each locale.

Of the 20 women selected to participate in the program in Bahir Dar:

- 1 is a widow, 6 are married, and 13 are single
- 5 have children and 15 do not
- 5 have no education at all, 10 attended primary school, and 5 attended secondary school
- 15 were unemployed and 5 were under-employed before starting the program
- 10 are proficient in Ethiopian Sign Language and 10 have no or very limited signing ability

Individual arrangements were made for each of the 20 participating women dependent on their existing skillsets and interests. The local implementing partner in Bahir Dar (Kal Center for Special Needs) worked individually in counseling beneficiaries, making plans & logistical arrangements, providing start-up capital, doing regular site visits, and providing training & mentoring. These women are now engaged in apprenticeships or have already commenced their income-generating activities in various industries, including commerce, sewing/embroidery, agriculture, animal husbandry, running small shops, breadmaking, etc.

Of the 20 women selected to participate in the program in Addis Ababa, 15 have remained fully active in the program, of which:

- 2 are divorced, 3 are married, and 10 are single
- 5 have children and 10 do not
- 7 attended primary school and 8 attended secondary school
- 11 were unemployed and 4 were under-employed before starting the program

Special arrangements were made for these 15 women in Addis Ababa to attend a 3-month food preparation training at the Vinvinido Food Preparation Training Institute in Piassa, Addis Ababa. This training, which is structured into 2-hour sessions that occur 3 times per week, is currently underway.

To fill the gap of the 5 women who were unable to proceed with the program, the local implementing partner (Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association) is making further assessments of other local Deaf women who already have skills or expertise, but need support to get their income-generating activities started.



2. **Mentoring & Support:** To provide regular mentoring support, counseling, life skills training, and formal Ethiopian Sign Language training for all participants.

Update: As part of the above-mentioned initiative, both local implementing partner organizations provide regular trainings in various topics (such as understanding deafness, social & economic challenges for Deaf women, leadership development, rights training, personal finance, etc.), as well as regular support and mentoring in both an individual and group capacity. Additionally, in Bahir Dar, regular training, mentoring, and support is given by 9 staff persons (5 of whom are Deaf themselves) to Deaf children through the Visions Model Deafness Center and at 3 nearby public schools with Deaf classrooms, which collectively serve 84 children (of which half are girls). And in Addis Ababa, regular support services and counseling are provided to women on an ongoing and

individual basis, and weekly “coffee ceremony” meetings are held every Sunday for all differently-abled women.



3. **Human Rights Trainings:** To conduct two 5-day training programs on human rights (including women’s rights and disabled persons rights), advocacy, and community organizing in partnership with local organizations.

Update: While we had to split up the trainings, all planned training sessions have now been conducted in both locations. Two 4-day “Deaf Women Empowerment Trainings” were held in Addis Ababa from April 25th – 28th, 2016 and in Bahir Dar from May 2nd – 3rd & 5th – 6th. Later, a 1-day training in “Social & Economic Problems for Deaf Women” was held in Addis Ababa on June 2nd, 2016. And a 1-day training on “Personal Leadership Development” was held in Bahir Dar on June 18th, 2016.

For the two 4-day trainings, the first day was led by the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA). EWDNA staff covered the history of disabilities and different models of development for the differently-abled, and facilitated a group-sharing discussion on experiences and ideas. The second day of the training was led directly by Visions Global Empowerment and covered personal leadership development, including many hands-on and experiential activities designed to demonstrate various topics. The third and fourth day of the training was conducted by representatives from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and covered the rights of all persons, the history of human rights, rights of women & the differently-abled, and the role of all Ethiopians in ensuring protection of and adherence to human rights laws. At the end of the training, participants gave their feedback, which included the following points:

1. The use of interactive learning methods and activities enabled participants to better understand and apply the concepts being taught
2. Sharing personal experiences was very powerful, therapeutic, and healing
3. They learned the basics of their human rights and how to report violations in Ethiopia
4. They learned about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and said they would share this important knowledge with families & friends
5. To be a leader, it is not necessary to be a person with great authority; anyone can be a leader for themselves and for others, no matter how small or how local
6. The training helped them to build self-confidence and stand up for themselves
7. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission expressed its gratitude for us having arranged these sessions, which occur only very rarely in Ethiopia, and encouraged future trainings. They would be happy to attend community education events and share their knowledge in those forums as well.



4. **Advocacy Materials:** To create printed (including posters, newsletters, brochures, etc.) and multimedia (including short films) public awareness materials about deafness and deaf-related issues.

Update: A team of 4 volunteer filmmakers from the U.S. traveled to Ethiopia from May 17th – June 11th, conducting interview and filming extensively for all 5 short educational films, which will cover the following topics:

1. Ethiopian Sign Language / What is Deafness?
2. Livelihoods
3. Education
4. Health
5. Community Participation

To achieve these films, the filmmakers met and spent time individually with a number of women who have compelling stories and whose experiences could speak to one of the 5 above-mentioned topics. These films are intended for a domestic audience within Ethiopia, so all films will be subtitled and dubbed in Amharic in full, making them fully accessible to both Deaf and hearing Ethiopians. As the purpose of these films is educational, we hope that they will help to create an environment of better understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of Deaf women and girls in society. These films are now in post-production, and will likely be ready for community screenings and educational / awareness-raising events beginning this fall 2016.

Aside from the short films production efforts, we have not yet undertaken the task of creating literature or awareness-raising materials for public consumption. We intend to tackle this objective in the second half of the grant period.



5. **Community Education:** To conduct regular (at least 12) community education and awareness-raising trainings for teachers, parents, deaf individuals and their families, physicians/medical students/health workers, and general community members about deafness, human rights, and deaf-related issues.

Update: Refer to the above objective; we intend to tackle this objective in the second half of the grant period.

6. **Capacity Building:** Through all of the above activities, to help build the capacity of local women's and disabled persons organizations actively engaged in serving, organizing, and empowering deaf women and girls.

Update: While this will be an ongoing activity throughout the grant period, major strides have already been made in this regard with the Kal Center for Special Needs in Bahir Dar, the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA) in Addis Ababa, and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which is active nationally. Both EWDNA and the Kal Center for Special Needs are led by women. EWDNA has nearly all women staff, and the Kal Center for Special Needs has half women staff, making these two organizations rarities in Ethiopia. We have witnessed both organizations invest in training, building skills, and widening experiences of their staff, and have seen their organizational capacity to plan & manage initiatives and work closely with foreign (English-speaking) partners increase. Additionally, we helped in the past to establish a website for the Kal Center for Special Needs (www.kalcenter.org), and we are currently working with EWDNA in developing one for them as well. We believe that having a website and social media presence should help them reach a wider audience, convey professionalism and experience, and help diversify their sources of support.

III. Funding Updates

We have not received any additional funding for the approved grant-related activities. We have not been actively pursuing additional funding in this regard either, as our ongoing fundraising efforts are focused on maintaining other programs and services that serve the Deaf community in Bahir Dar.

IV. Organizational & Program Situation Update

There have been no changes in leadership, program-related staff, or local implementing partner organizations, and no major organizational or program-related updates. Everything to-date has gone quite smoothly.

V. Beneficiaries Update

Original Estimate: 400 women & girls
of Direct Beneficiaries to-date: 151
of Indirect Beneficiaries to-date: 15 (*children of Deaf women livelihoods development participants*)
Total # of Beneficiaries to-date: 166

There has been no change in the total estimated number of beneficiaries/individuals impacted from these grant activities. We still estimate impacting the lives of 400+ women and girls in Ethiopia. As we develop our public outreach / awareness-raising materials, especially 5 short educational films on deafness and the experiences of Deaf Ethiopian women & girls, we intend to directly reach several hundred more individuals, most likely at community events & screenings to be held this fall.

The one current revision to the estimated number of beneficiaries is to the number of Deaf women livelihoods development participants in Addis Ababa. While 20 were initially selected and joined the training program, 5 of the women have been unable to follow through on their commitment due to outside pressures. Thus, the total number of women currently participating in the livelihoods development program between Bahir Dar (20) and Addis Ababa (15) is now 35, which is still within the original objectives set forth in the initial grant proposal. However, efforts are being made now to identify and support another 5 women in need in Addis Ababa to fill the gap.

VI. Challenges Encountered & Solutions for Overcoming

In implementing the project, we have encountered the following challenges:

- Many of the livelihoods development beneficiaries, especially in Bahir Dar, are illiterate and live in extreme poverty, which has added greater responsibility to local implementing partner staff in communications, organizing trainings, and general logistics. With additional effort and attention though, local staff are finding ways to overcome these challenges.
- Many women and girls face strong family pressure not to attend trainings or program activities (mostly from parents, though also from husbands and others), because of the domestic services / free labor they provide for their families at home. As the two local implementing partner organizations gear up for the second half of the grant activities, it is very important that the families of our participants be included in the community education / awareness-raising activities and events. In Bahir Dar, we encountered these same issues several years ago – with patience, commitment, and regular outreach, we know it is possible to slowly change the culture and the ways in which family members view and treat their Deaf relatives.
- There was some discrepancy in the information originally presented by livelihoods development program applicants and some difficulty in verifying that information, which prolonged the selection of beneficiaries in both locations. This added responsibility to the local implementing partners and stretched the timeline for initiating the livelihoods development trainings & support by a few additional weeks. These challenges have since been overcome.
- As expected, there are obvious information barriers between local implementing partners & trainers and the women participating in the livelihoods development program. In Bahir Dar, we have ample staff who are proficient in Ethiopian Sign Language and/or Deaf themselves, so this has not been a major issue. But in Addis Ababa, the local implementing staff have had to channel much of their communications through family members or friends and have had to ensure that ample interpreters are on-hand during training sessions.

VII. Revisions to Original Objectives

There have been no major revisions to the original goals or objectives outlined in our initial grant proposal. We did decide to initially prioritize 1) getting the livelihoods development activities fully operational, 2) conducting the 5 days of rights education & empowerment trainings in both Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar, and 3) doing all of the filming for the 5 short educational films about deafness & the experiences of Deaf women and girls in Ethiopia. For the second half of the grant period, we plan to focus primarily on community education and awareness-raising, as well as maintaining all ongoing activities.

VIII. Progress Toward Stated Objectives

Major Activity to be Accomplished	Activity Timeline Update
Hire and train 2 program staff (Local Program Coordinator and Interpreter)	✓ Completed: <i>February 2016</i>
Advertise and solicit applications from Deaf women for Livelihoods Development Program, in partnership with the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association	✓ Completed: <i>February – May 2016</i>

Make logistical arrangements for establishing small industries and providing vocational training to women participants in Livelihoods Development Program	✓ Completed: <i>February – July 2016</i>
Conduct two 5-day human rights education and advocacy trainings (one each in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa) with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission	✓ Completed: <i>April – May 2016 (4 days/each); June 2016 (1 day/each)</i>
Create 5 short educational films on Deafness, Deaf Rights, Ethiopian Sign Language, and other Critical Deaf and Women’s Issues	✓ Partially Completed: <i>May – June 2016 (filming); June 2016 – present (post-production; scheduled completion September 2016)</i>
Create, print, and distribute at least 10 rights-based outreach/awareness-raising materials, and e-archive materials	In Progress: planning for implementing this activity over the next several months
Conduct quarterly program reviews and evaluations	In Progress: first 2 progress reports submitted by local implementing partners
Organize selected Livelihoods Development Program participants into small collectives and commence vocational training, regular mentoring, and business development activities	In Progress: commenced these activities in May 2016; progress will continue throughout the grant period

IX. Anticipated Difficulties in Adhering to Original Timeline

At the moment, considering the progress achieved to-date and the pending activities & objectives, we see no reason that we will be unable to achieve all stated objectives within the originally stated timeframe (by January 31, 2017).

X. Message for Dining for Women Supporters & Team

We are so grateful for the vital and generous support offered by the Dining for Women family. You have enabled us to do our work in hopefully changing the lives of many Deaf Ethiopian women and girls, and changing the public’s perception and inclusion of them. We are especially looking forward to sharing the five short educational films about deafness in Ethiopia, which feature incredibly moving and inspiring personal stories from Deaf women and girls who have endured great hardship but have now found a new reason to be hopeful. While the films are intended for a domestic audience within Ethiopia in order to promote understanding of deafness and reduce stigma & social exclusion, we are producing versions of the film that are in Ethiopian Sign Language + Amharic, as well as in English, so that we can share them with all of you. Thank you again, and keep up the great work in changing the lives of women worldwide for the better!