



# AFRICAN SERVICES

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## COMMITTEE

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Volume 4, Issue 2

March/April 2013

### In This Issue

- A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia
- ASC Receives WHDC Grant
- Immigration Reform Charges Ahead
- Client Profile: An Unlikely Journey
- Fun in the City: Human Rights Watch Film Festival
- Fun in the City: Open Mic Night: Uptown Open

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### A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia



**Communications Director, Stephanie Kaplan, headed to Ethiopia to observe and document the work being done in the five clinics. Read below as she takes you along on her journey.**

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The smoke billows throughout the room, and the sweet smell of incense fills the air. It's a familiar smell to me now. Abret holds out the roasting pan, as she wafts the smoke from the perfectly roasted coffee beans towards my face. I nod my head with approval.



This is part of the coffee ceremony, a ceremony that in Ethiopia you sit through multiple times each day, and a ceremony that I now sadly miss back in the United States. It's been 4 weeks since my trip to African Services Ethiopia and the sights and sounds of the country are still with me.

2013 marks the 10th Anniversary of African Services work in Ethiopia, the home country of our founder, Asfaha Hadera. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity in March to head over to visit our offices and clinics in Ethiopia, do what I could assist the office with various communications and marketing matters, and document our travel around the country.

## A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)



The trip lasted just a little over two weeks, and a lot of travel was packed in to that time. I arrived on a Thursday afternoon to a beautiful blue sky and warm air - a much welcome departure from the frigid temperatures of New York. Kim and Asfaha, the co-executive directors of African Services were there to greet me.

An adventure lay ahead, and I couldn't wait! In our relatively short time in the country, we managed to skirt our way from one of the southernmost cities in the country all the way to one of the northernmost ones.

During our stay we visited four out of the five clinics that we have operating in Ethiopia. Our first stop was to the first clinic ever established, the Shola Clinic in Addis Ababa.



The sign above the entrance to the Shola Clinic.

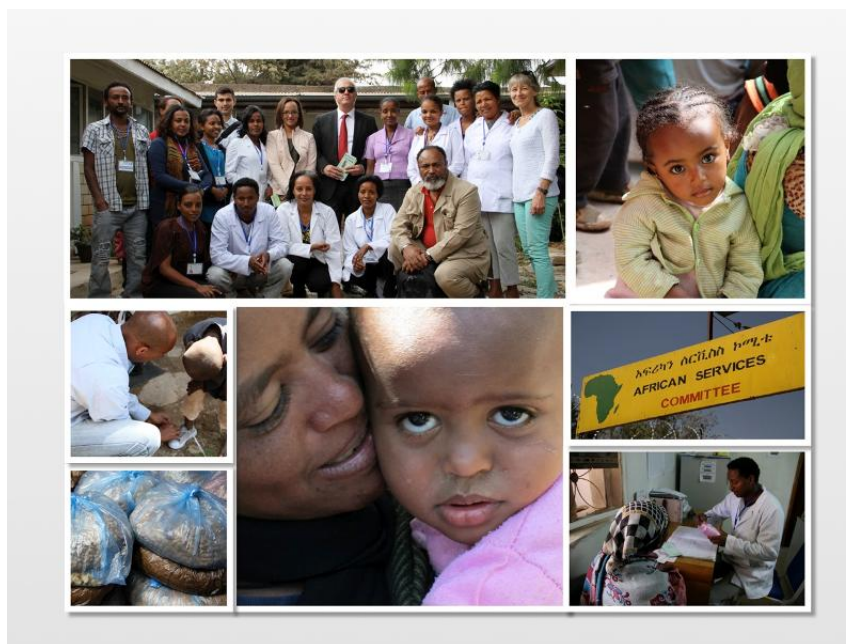
This clinic began as a small one-room structure placed situated in one of Addis' largest markets, Shola. In the ten years since it's establishment it has grown to over 4 buildings and serves a client base of over 10,000 each year.



The bustling courtyard at the Shola Clinic

## A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)

I was amazed to learn of all the services that ASC was providing to its clients. From HIV testing, treatment and care, to family planning services, to nutrition, to deworming and shoe distribution, the list goes on and all of the services are provided completely FREE of charge! As the morning wore on the courtyard got fuller and fuller with clients coming to take advantage of the variety of services offered. There were children being fit for a new pair of TOMS shoes, mothers receiving their weekly nutritional supplement bags, an HIV+ support group, and clients waiting to be tested.



A collage of images from the Shola Clinic

As I toured the clinic I couldn't help but be moved by the kind smiles of everyone I met. Staff members worked tirelessly to accommodate every client, and I could see the dedication and caring in the way the staff carried themselves. This work is not always easy, but for each person that I talked with the same thoughts arose, that they believe in the mission of African Services and they are happy to do what they can to be a part of that.

The clients were equally as inspiring, as I interviewed countless mothers and fathers. The common thread seemed to be that African Services was their 'life line.' Its location in the Shola Market is significant, as it also places it near a particular section of the market where Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) run their businesses. Each day dozens of women come to the clinic and collect bags of condoms and consult with our family planning staff about birth control and other methods of STD and pregnancy prevention. In addition, outreach staff members go out into the community and into the CSW quarters and educate the population on HIV and other STD's and methods of prevention. Many of the CSW clients I spoke with retell the story of how they were first educated on condom use by an African Services outreach worker, and now they have the knowledge and confidence they need to demand condom use from clients. It was heartbreaking to hear some of the stories, but at the same time inspiring to see how African Services was truly making a difference in the lives of these individuals.

On the outskirts of Addis, lies Entoto Mountain, an area of Addis that although close in proximity, is far removed from the assistance of local NGO's and medical care. Recognizing this issue, African Services has been traveling to the mountain to assist with the growing population of young children who are HIV positive. This 'positive kids' initiative has grown to include IGA projects for families, nutrition, deworming and more. The children were thrilled to see the African Services car arrive, and flocked to their visitors to receive a shipment of seeds from our partner, [High Mowing Seeds](#).

## A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)



A Collage of images from the Entoto Mountain visit.

As you might recall, in December we put a call out to you, our supporters, to assist us in filling a funding gap for our Ethiopia operations, and you came to our aid. We raised significant funds, enabling ASC Ethiopia clinics to remain open and operational. I only wish that every person who reads this would have the opportunity to travel to Ethiopia and see first-hand the work that is being done on the ground, and the dedication of the staff as they serve some of the most under-served populations in the country. I only hope that my documentation and these photos will be enough to at least partially convey the beauty of the country, its people and the work that African Services is doing there.

Stay Tuned for Part 2 of our adventures - heading South - in the next newsletter.

--Stephanie Kaplan

## News & Activities

### African Services Receives West Harlem Development Corporation Grant



In these trying economic times, it can be incredibly difficult for community based organizations to stay afloat. These same economic circumstances often bring more people to our doors. Luckily, in the midst of this difficulty, the West Harlem Local Development Corporation (WHDC) recognizes the important role that Community-Based Organizations (CBO) play in providing necessary resources and services to the community. In collaboration with Columbia University as a part of their Community Benefits Agreement. African Services applied for funding and was awarded a \$45,000 dollar grant.

The grant will be used to expand the services that the ASC Testing Center already provides, and also to develop the plan and funding requests necessary to apply for Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status. Federal qualification provides many benefits, including discounted costs for medication,

## African Services Receives West Harlem Development Corporation Grant (cont.)

malpractice coverage, and access to the Vaccines for Children Program. This is a move that the African Services Committee has been contemplating for a long time.

"In our thirty years of existence we have always kept our eye towards this goal of establishing ourselves as a health clinic. This will allow us to truly meet the needs of our clients, and fill a void in the community," says Co-Executive Director, Kim Nichols.

African Services is excited to have received this award from WHDC, and look forward to moving forward in our plans to expand on the services ASC offers to the community.

## The Time is Now: Immigration Reform is Coming!



ASC Clients pose for a photo together in DC at the April 10<sup>th</sup> Immigration Rally

Immigration reform has been a hot button issue this year, especially with the Dream Act and the Group of 8's bill currently working their way through the legislature. So far, proposed bills for immigration reform have been a mixed bag of helpful and harmful laws. Since the campaign for comprehensive immigration reform began on January 28th of this year, Bakary Tandia, a case manager here at African Services, has been hard at work with the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), lobbying to improve these bills.

"No bill is perfect," says Tandia, adding "We need to make sure that the positive elements of these bills are kept and that the negative elements are improved."

They have had many victories, and challenging the Group of 8's scrapping of the diversity visa lottery, which has been in place since 1995, is only one of them. The lottery allows 50,000 immigrants from underrepresented countries to have green cards, and many of the winners come from African countries.

"The lottery is very beneficial for African Immigrants, and does not hurt anyone else's chances of getting a green card. It's really a matter of fairness - Africans are an underrepresented immigrant group," Tandia explains.

During a rally in Washington D.C on March 10th, the NYIC secured the Black Caucus's commitment to



vote against the Group of 8's bill if the diversity visa lottery was not included.

## The Time is Now: Immigration Reform is Coming! (cont.)

"Having their support is invaluable," says Tandia.

Many clients of African Services have also been working with Bakary Tandia and the NYIC. On April 10th African Services secured two busses to send clients down to Washington D.C for the Rally on Immigration Reform. Keynote speakers included Benjamin Todd, CEO of the NAACP, and Congresswoman Yvette Clark, who both highlighted the numerous contributions of African and Caribbean immigrants to the United States.

It is vital that the immigrants whose lives will be directly affected by these new bills have their opinions known.



"The event was very successful. There is so much diversity within our campaign, and it is important that we take everyone's voice and make one unified voice," says Tandia.

Although there are many different people with different viewpoints within the movement, they can all agree that change needs to happen in order for immigration policy to be sustainable and just. At this rally, clients at African Services were able to have their voices heard by those on Capitol Hill, which will bring them even closer to their goal: successful and comprehensive immigration reform.

--Kelly Gilbert

## An Unlikely Journey Client Profile: Mamadou Bah



**Mamadou poses with ASC social worker, Alia Azab**

When people look at Mamadou today, they see a confident, cheerful high school student with a bright future, and he is all of those things. At the same time, no one could imagine what he has gone through to get to this point. It is amazing how far he's come, since he first came to African Service's doors.

Mamadou's story starts in his home country of Mali, where he lived with his father, step mother and older sister. His home situation was far from safe- his father was abusive, and his step mother would perform black magic on him and his sister. In need of an escape, he turned to his mother and the father of a friend. Together, they gathered the resources for him to emigrate to the U.S in search of a safer, better life.

Sadly, the reality he was met with in the U.S was bleak. He had to wear the

## Client Profile: Mamadou Bah (cont.)

same clothes every day, and depended largely on the kindness of strangers. His home was a stranger's couch in the Bronx. When the man decided to charge \$375 in rent, Mamadou was forced to leave the apartment. Now homeless, and desperate for help, he reached out to African Services.

When he arrived at African Services, he was immediately connected with a French speaking social worker, who learned that he had not eaten in over 24 hours. He was provided a food pantry bag to get him through the next few days. African Services worked tirelessly to find a shelter that he could stay in, but they were met with a lot of dead ends- the shelters were either already overcrowded or had specific requirements, such as a mental health diagnosis.

Within a few weeks, African Services was able to connect him with a Malian family living in Queens, which is now his foster family. Mamadou and his family have continued to work with the legal team at African Services, and Mamadou expects to have his immigration papers by the end of the year.

Compared who he was when he first came to African Services, Mamadou is a changed man. He doesn't have to worry about where he will sleep for the night or where his next meal will come from. Now he's a normal high school student- he may even join the soccer team this coming fall.

--Kelly Gilbert

## Fun in the City

Stephanie Kaplan, Communications Director Recommends...



# FILM FESTIVAL

The Human Rights Watch Film Festival (HRWFF) bears witness to human rights violations and create a forum for courageous individuals on both sides of the lens to empower audiences with the knowledge that personal commitment can make a difference. The film festival brings to life human rights abuses through storytelling in a way that challenges each individual to empathize and demand justice for all people.

**What:** Human Rights Watch Film Festival

**When:** June 13th - 23rd

**Where:** Film Society of Lincoln Center, IFC Film Center

This year, like last, we will be sponsoring a screening of an Africa-themed film at the festival. For 2013, ASC is proud to partner with the Human Rights Watch Film Festival (HRWFF) for the film, [In the Shadow of the Sun](#).

Visit the [HRWFF Site](#) for more information.

Kelly Gilbert, African Services Intern recommends...



### **Uptown Open: Spirited Young Voices Expressing Their Truth**

Three years strong, our partnership with Urban Word NYC continues with *Uptown Open*. This monthly open mic series for teens is a safe, uncensored space for poets, spoken word artists, emcees, scholars and activists to share their powerful and important voices.

**When:** Thursday, May 16th, 5 pm

**Where:** Harlem Stage Gatehouse - 150 Convent Avenue, New York, NY, 10031

**How much:** FREE for Teens, \$5 Adults

For more information about the even, click [here](#).

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