



AFRICAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE

429 West 127th Street, New York, NY 10027 phone: 212-222-3882 fax: 212-222-7065 online: www.africanservices.org

Volume 4, Issue 3

May/June 2013

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A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia, Pt 2



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. This is part 2.

After spending a few amazing days exploring Addis and seeing our work in Shola and Entoto, we welcomed Demetri Blanas, a Mt. Sinai medical fellow, and immediately packed our bags to head to the southern region of Ethiopia. In the last several years, African Services has expanded its reach within the country, and thanks to an amazingly fruitful partnership with BGI Ethiopia and Castel Wineries, ASC has expanded its reach to two vibrant and bustling towns -- Hawassa and Ziway.



A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)

The journey was taken by car, and allowed for me to see the gradual transformation from the dry and arid landscape of central Ethiopia to the lush and colorful landscapes further south. The road cut through vast swaths of farmland, which gave way to lakes as we slowly made our way south.



Kim, Demetri & Hana relax on the veranda on our coffee stop.

We stopped along the way for a coffee break--I was getting used to the 3-5 cups of strong coffee each day--at this beautiful mansion that seemed so out of place set along the roadside. Asfaha, being so well-connected, of course knew the owner and we were treated to a nice breakfast and serving of Ethiopian coffee. the veranda was so spectacular, and overlooked the main road and surrounding farm lands.

The journey continued for a couple more hours, not without the few typical hair raising moments that occur when in a vehicle on African roads. The road was a two lane road, but was congested with 18-wheeler trucks delivering loads, and of course littered with lost or straying donkeys, cows, dogs, and more. We arrived in Ziway in one piece, thankfully, and took a stroll through the surrounding area.

From the beginning, I noticed that we were not in Addis anymore. We stayed at this quaint little hotel that was walking distance from Lake Ziway, and the first thing I noticed were the interesting birds that populated the area. they looked like a mix between a stork and a vulture, and are known as "Maribous." These maribous are **everywhere** in the city, and it seemed every tree was crowded with them.



Maribous perched in the trees

A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)

In the early morning, before heading to the clinic, we took a walk towards Lake Ziway to see the fisherman heading out for the day and to get a view of the lake as the sun rose above. It was an amazing sight to see all of the fishing boats and small dug out canoes transporting people across the lake. The maribous were scattered about as well, as they waited for the fisherman to toss them scraps.



Later that day we headed over to the ASC Ziway clinic, a clinic that was established in partnership with BGI Ethiopia and Castel Winery in 2010. I was struck immediately upon entering of the energy exuded by the staff and clients. There was something special about this place. In only 2 short years, it grew from being a 7-tents based clinic in the heart of the city, to its new permanent home in the walled off courtyard just off the market. What was most striking was the courtyard packed with young men and women - Ziway is home to a large youth population - who are members of the ASC youth group. This group also does theater performances to educate the population about HIV, and we were treated to a lively comedic performance!



A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)

I persuaded them to participate in a growing US viral video fad - the "Harlem Shake," and corralled the youth group, and our founder, Asfaha Hadera, into participating. You can check out the video here:



The Harlem Shake – ASC Ethiopia Edition

I interviewed several women who frequent the clinic, who through various circumstances have been forced to turn to commercial sex work to provide for their children. The stories were heartbreaking, yet they all praised African Services and the assistance that we have provided them. Many had never heard previously of HIV, nor did they know that condoms could be used to protect them from the virus, and now they are able to come to African Services and pick up free condoms, get tested, and access vital treatment and care to which they previously had no access.

After our amazing visit in Ziway, we hopped back in the car and headed even further south, to the town of Hawassa. Asfaha, ever the amazing tour guide, took us on a short detour to a beautiful lake resort, where we relaxed for several hours, ate a wonderful lunch, drank some crisp Ambo (quickly becoming my favorite drink - sparkling local mineral water), and took in a little swimming and kayaking.



Upon arriving in Hawassa, the first thing I noticed was the monkeys...yes, monkeys, and they were EVERYWHERE! We had a little friend visit us at our hotel, and the staff coaxed him down with some bread. I don't know why, but I absolutely love monkeys, so was thrilled to be so close to them. I quickly learned, however, that the locals saw them more as pests. I learned that lesson quickly, when we were out for breakfast and the monkeys swarmed our table, hopped onto our chairs, and literally stole the breadbasket off the table!

A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia (cont.)



The next morning, we headed in to the clinic. Hawassa is the newest ASC clinic to be established in Ethiopia, having only been set up in 2012. The establishment is due in large part to our partnership with BGI Ethiopia and Castel Winery. Their support for our mission has allowed us to expand the reach of our services, and it was obvious by the large crowd when we arrived, that the clinic was desperately needed in the area. The waiting room was packed with people waiting for HIV testing and family planning counseling. In the rear courtyard, the nurses were setting up for a TOMS shoe distribution day, and the outreach workers were distributing condoms to local commercial sex workers.



What struck me most about these clinics is that although in their infancy, the vibrancy and hope from everyone - staff to clients - was pouring out of its doors. Having only heard of the work being done here, there are no words to describe what it was like to get to see it first hand, and to speak with the people who were benefiting from the work that we are doing here. It was truly awe-inspiring. The sheer strength that our clients exhibit in the face of seemingly impossible situations gave me so much hope, and I feel like even in the pictures you can see that hope and strength come out.

As we hopped back in the car to make the daunting 5 hour trek back to Addis Ababa, I believe everyone felt buoyed by the spirit and energy that we witnessed during our visit.

Next up...a plane flight to the northern region of Ethiopia - Mekele. Stay tuned!

News and Activities

AIDS Walk 2013: A Soggy but Successful Day



Staff and supporters huddle together under umbrellas to take shelter from the rain.

Every May as the air begins to turn warmer and the snow melts away, African Services gears up for the annual New York City AIDS Walk. This amazing event brings together organizations and people from all over the city, all bound together by one goal: to raise money in support of those living with HIV.

This event is near and dear to our hearts, as assisting those living with HIV is at the core of our mission at African Services Committee -- especially at our clinics in Ethiopia that serve hundreds of thousands of clients and children who are HIV positive.

This year, once again, we decided to dedicate our AIDS Walk campaign to raising funds for ASC Ethiopia and the Pediatric HIV Nutrition program. In recent years, with budget cutbacks, the nutrition program has had to drastically reduce the amount and variety of nutrition that it provides to clients and their families, and we felt we could truly make a difference in this area.

Our goal was to raise \$10,000, and if you asked us at on May 13th if we thought we would reach that goal, we would sadly have had to say no. However, thanks to all of you and all of our fundraisers who heard our plea, you came to our aid! In just 5 days we managed to go from \$5,000 to over \$10,000 raised in support of ASC Ethiopia.

Not only that, dedicated staff, fundraisers and supporters braved the soggy conditions to join us for the AIDS Walk event! Armed with rain jackets and umbrellas our walkers stayed as dry as possible, and although the weather may have been dreary, the spirits were high!

Thank you to everyone who supported us in this fundraising effort. Your generosity means more than you know to us here at ASC New York and to our staff and clients in ASC Ethiopia.

--Stephanie Kaplan

ASC Promotes Active Living in Harlem



On Monday nights, a spacious conference room on the fourth floor of a factory building in West Harlem is transformed. Conference tables are pushed aside, chairs carried out, and rugs rolled up: the nine-to-five workday concludes, the music starts and a Zumba class commences. This spatial re-purposing is part of the Active Living Initiative, a new program that supports the mission of African Services Committee to improve the health and self-sufficiency of the African community in New York City.

African Services' Active Living Initiative aims to educate the African and local Harlem community about how small lifestyle changes can significantly improve health and well-being. Through providing information about alternative ways to be physically active, the program shows that there are more ways to get "fit" than joining a gym. Active living means integrating physical activity into the rhythm and routine of daily life. These everyday efforts are easy to incorporate, and can be personalized for

Active Living Article (cont.)

many types and varieties of lifestyles. Active Living may include taking the stairs instead of the elevator home, walking or cycling instead of taking the subway to work, or making time for hobbies such as gardening or dancing.

Nearly a third of New Yorkers report doing no physical activity. Physical inactivity kills an estimated 6,300 people each year by raising their risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. In Harlem, the need to address this issue is especially dire: rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease remain significantly above citywide averages. By accentuating the importance and accessibility of physical activity, the Active Living Initiative works to bring the value of physical exercise to the forefront.

African Services is committed to addressing the needs of community members by making the healthy choice the easy choice. Through free fitness classes, a webpage with fitness listings, and a bilingual, multimedia educational campaign, African Services aims to encourage the Harlem community to take greater advantage of existing free, low-cost, and accessible physical activity resources in Upper Manhattan. The educational poster campaign will feature individuals living active in Harlem and suggestions for staying active, encouraging readers with the motto "Make Your Health Your Priority!" This program joins one of many programs at ASC that are intended to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles.

African Services Committee is one of a number of community organizations that have joined a new citywide public health initiative - The Partnership for a Healthier New York City. The Partnership is committed to making New York City a healthier place to live, work and play by supporting effective community-level efforts to reduce chronic disease in the city. For more information, visit www.HealthierNYC.org.

All are welcome to join us at African Services for weekly aerobic kickboxing classes every Monday, 5 to 6pm starting July 8. Zumba classes will be offered at 6:30pm, on alternate Mondays. These classes take place in our community space on the fourth floor and are free and open to all members of the community. Learn more by clicking [here](#) and visiting the Active Living webpage.

--Sara Klugman

ASC Staff Discuss Immigration Issues on ABC 7's "Here and Now"



African Services' staff members, Bakary Tandia and Olubunmi Segun, met with host Sandra Bookman, to discuss the impending comprehensive immigration reform legislation. As a staff attorney working specifically with clients on immigration issues, Olubunmi was able to contribute an interesting insight into how the immigrant community is feeling as this legislation hangs in limbo.

Bakary Tandia has been working tirelessly for years on realizing the dream of comprehensive immigration reform. He brings to light some of the apprehension that immigration advocates have with the currently proposed legislation, including the dissolution of the Diversity Visa Lottery and the elimination

of family-based visas, allowing for U.S. citizens to apply for visa for siblings and other family members. The elimination of the family-based visas alone would eliminate over 65,000 applicants from gaining visas to come to the United States, and the Diversity Visa Lottery -- where a majority of applicants come from African countries -- would eliminate an additional 55,000 people.

We at African Services, along with our clients, wait anxiously to see what becomes of the bill as it passes through the final stages of the legislative process. Comprehensive immigration reform has been a long time coming, and we look forward to the day when clients have a clear path to earning citizenship and equal rights here in the United States.

A Day in the Life: ASC Legal Intern



Nina Papachristou spent her Spring semester interning in the legal department at ASC. She became a valuable member of the legal department team, and we were sad to see her go. Nina gives us 'behind the scenes' look at the life of an intern at African Services Committee:

A day as an intern at African Services Committee is always full of surprises, and no two days are alike. You may get interrupted by curious children of Guinean immigrants peeping in your door while you attempt to organize documents for a pending legal case. You may get called away to translate for a French or Spanish speaker and their lawyer at a moment's notice. You may also get so caught up researching military conscription in Sudan that you forget to go home.

As I know from working at ASC for the past six months, there is no better place to encounter people genuinely interested in and committed to their work. As an intern in the legal department, I organized cases to file, helped clients fill out legal forms, drafted affidavits, and conducted

background research. But what I really did was meet and talk to people from all over the world about their lives, their hopes, their dreams, and the reasons they came to America. At any other legal nonprofit, I might have spent most of my time at the copier. At ASC, I got to be a part of helping clients attain legal immigration status, recover their homes, or reunite with family members.

Every day at ASC, people walk through the door with fascinating backgrounds, needing someone to help them gain one of the most basic of rights: the right to live with integrity, where they choose. Thanks to ASC's incredibly kind and friendly legal team, I learned about each step that needed to be completed to help immigrants receive legal status. As an intern, I would listen to their stories, take notes, and help them fill out basic legal forms like the application for a green card, or a renewal of their employment authorization. I would also research current events in their home country, especially during the time period in which they left, if they were filing an asylum claim which required them to show proof that it was likely they had been persecuted. Evidence could include human rights reports from non-governmental organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, news articles, and relevant local laws. For example, an asylum claim from an Eritrean journalist based on political persecution would be strengthened by a printout of an Eritrean law barring free expression. I would call employees at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to check on a client's legal immigration status, or contact a client's friends, social worker, or doctor to get information for their case. Sometimes, I would translate a birth certificate into English from French. A few times, I drafted affidavits to be signed by friends and colleagues of a client. When a case was ready to be filed in court, I would organize the documents in the proper order, write a table of contents that included descriptions of each document, and make copies. And finally, the last step: I filed the documents in court! That may sound like the boring part, but not many people have seen how chaotic Bronx Housing Court can get - it is not boring.

Before I started volunteering at ASC, I had only a passing interest in the law. I had taken a few undergraduate classes on the American legal system and the post-colonial legal systems of Africa, which were interesting enough for me to pursue that interest by working at ASC. But it was my hands-on experience working with African immigrants that now has me seriously thinking about law school. I couldn't be more grateful to the lawyers at ASC who were so welcoming to an intern without a law background. Every day at ASC is busier than the one before, especially with such a dedicated team of lawyers working on so many cases at once. I learned more about immigration law every day at ASC than I ever would have in law school, by practicing it with incredibly knowledgeable people. Honestly, I couldn't be more thankful to them, or more sad to leave. Next year, during my senior year at Stanford University, I will be writing an honors thesis about African asylum seekers in New York, inspired by the immigrants and lawyers whom I met over the past six months. There are truly no words to express how much I've learned, and how inspired I have become from my time there. "Thank you"...I think thank you are the best words I can think of.

Fun in the City

Stephanie Kaplan, Communications Director recommends...



Play Streets are car-free streets that provide children and others with safe, supervised places to play outside. We play sports and games, lead arts and crafts activities, and lead dance classes, too.

What is the goal of Play Streets? Our goal is to provide children with open space in their neighborhoods to be physically active and have fun outdoors. Our aim is to turn these Play Streets into spaces for positive social interaction and community building.

How do Play Streets work? A Play Street is an area of active play managed and supervised by a community group. Play Streets operate, under adult supervision, between 10am to 2pm, one day per week.

When/Where: Varying Dates (depending on location) - July 16th - August 29th



- **West Harlem:** Every Tuesday, July 16th - August 27th, 10 am - 2 pm -- Hamilton Place - West 136th and Broadway
- **Forest Avenue:** Every Wednesday, July 17th - August 28th, 10 am - 2 pm -- Forest Avenue b/w 156th Street and Westchester Avenue
- **East Harlem:** Every Thursday, July 18th - August 29th, 10 am - 2 pm -- 104th Street b/w 2nd and 3rd Avenue

Call Harvest Home (the organizers of the uptown Play Streets) for more information at 212-828-3361 or email us at playstreets@harvesthomefm.org.

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