

The Need

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than three-quarters of the population lives on less than \$1 per day – a consequence of recurring drought in a country heavily reliant on agricultural production. Nearly all Ethiopians are subsistence farmers, with little opportunity to pursue goals beyond meeting their family's basic needs.



A half-century of autocratic and military rule has further exacerbated Ethiopia's precarious economic situation. In the 1980s, the country's Marxist economy, poor harvests and ongoing civil war brought severe famine to millions of people. In 2007, UNICEF estimated that Ethiopia has 5.7 million orphans – a result of multiple and widespread causes, including a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection.

In 1995, the country's first multi-party elections brought an end to two decades of military rule. Ethiopia became a federal democratic republic and started developing a viable economy – a process however strained by ongoing political tensions.

Holt's History in Ethiopia

Holt assessed and established an international adoption program (ICA) in Ethiopia in 2007. In Ethiopia's capitol city, Addis Ababa, Holt founded a transitional home with capacity to care for 35 children in process for ICA. Through partnership with a local NGO, Holt also helped renovate a childcare facility in the rural southern region of Durame and subsequently began in-taking children. By the end of 2007, Holt had completed two adoptions. Despite more restrictive processing requirements the following year, Holt-Ethiopia's ICA program grew rapidly.

While ICA proved a successful way to bring Ethiopia's homeless children into loving, permanent homes, Holt also began exploring ways to keep children in their birth families and their birth culture. In 2008, Holt introduced a family preservation program designed to alleviate the crippling poverty endured by many Ethiopian families, enabling them to provide for their children.

Current Projects

In 2009, Holt-Ethiopia allied with community and regional leaders to identify the "poorest of the poor" in four impoverished regions – 120 families with 180 children under 10 years old. Here, social workers collaborate with each family to create an action plan toward self-reliance. Key to a family's action plan is access to education for younger children, and the opportunity for older children serving as heads of household to develop vocational skills or income-generating projects such as keeping livestock or small retail. After providing the resources and start-up funds for these projects, Holt monitors their progress on a monthly basis. Assisted families also join action support groups (ASGs). Composed of 5 or 6 families, ASGs discuss common needs and concerns and seek ways to help each other.



Once they've achieved food security, reliable income and adequate housing, when their children are attending school and their medical and psychosocial needs are being met, a family is considered stable. They have achieved their goal of self-reliance and are encouraged to remain in their ASG to serve as role models to others. Holt's family preservation work is diverse and also includes counseling, food assistance, educational sponsorship and health care.

In addition to case-by-case interventions, Holt made a broader effort to improve health care for Ethiopia's rural poor in 2009 with the renovation and expansion of a maternal-child health clinic in Shinshicho, a district capitol. The clinic's capacity to treat patients subsequently grew from 35 people receiving services per day to 250. The new clinic enables health care workers to improve child survival and promote long-term health of mothers and children. Increased education about family planning, health and sanitation, and pre- and postnatal services also reinforce Holt's efforts to prevent child abandonment and preserve family stability in the region.

In 2009 and 2010, Holt helped coordinate two medical/surgical teams at the Shinshicho Medical Center and at a hospital in Durame. Here, volunteer medical teams from the U.S. worked alongside Ethiopian physicians to provide specialized care to those who couldn't otherwise afford treatment. The collaborative effort served to enrich the knowledge and skills of staff at the two facilities, giving Ethiopian medical personnel the surgical-team experience to perform operations independently.

In 2010, Holt also equipped a clinic to provide better health care for mothers and children in the District of Doyogena, where Holt provides family preservation services to 120 households.

Holt-Ethiopia's ICA program has quickly become one of Holt's largest. In 2009, Holt completed 161 adoption assignments and 175 are projected for 2010. Holt maintains two intake centers and one childcare center in partnership with local organizations, providing nurturing care to hundreds of children while they await permanent placement.

Strategic Directions

The brisk pace of ICA in Ethiopia continues. Under increased scrutiny by some Ethiopian media outlets and international NGOs – many of whom advocate humanitarian activities only – the government has, however, implemented new legal and processing requirements. While now more aligned with international standards of ethical practice, the process has also become more difficult.

Over the past two years, Holt staff and board members have built positive relationships with government officials in Ethiopia – interactions that also provided a platform to allay fears and dispel myths about the lives of adopted Ethiopian children. Holt plans

to continue working with government partners to improve child welfare practices and maintain consistent adoption assignments.



Buoyed by the initial success of the family preservation program, Holt-Ethiopia has signed agreements with key officials to expand child welfare services to new zonal areas. An additional 300 households, and approximately 500 children, are slated to receive support. Educational sponsorship, including funding to improve buildings and provide school supplies, will further expand Holt's outreach in the coming years.

Holt is also partnering with a local orphanage, zonal police and the local social service offices to reunite children with their birth families. To ensure families' capacity to care for their children, Holt provides funds for training, family counseling, food and clothing. As Holt begins to serve new regions, the number of reunifications is expected to grow.

In 2010, Holt initiated a fundraising campaign to complete renovation of the Shinshicho Medical Clinic. Thanks to support by the Ethiopian government, and the local community's commitment to raise significant matching funds, the clinic was upgraded to a maternal-child health grade hospital. With additional funding from Holt donors and adoptive parents, the \$1.2 million construction project is projected to complete in 2012 or early 2013.

After the success of the first two medical campaigns, Holt drew considerable interest from donors in the U.S. Holt will fund another medical campaign in 2011, and will actively pursue grant and donor funding to grow services in all areas of Holt's work in Ethiopia.