

VLM: News from Ambo, Ethiopia, Spring 2019

Life at the Deaf School has been very busy since the start of the year, especially with the registration of 22 new students all of whom came from the countryside. This means the number of students at the school has trebled over the past two years. A bit of a challenge, but the sort of challenge the school is only too happy to respond to.

The last number of months have been exceptionally busy with lots of visitors and activities.

Ms. Margaret Farrell: Volunteer (Retired Teacher of the Deaf)



Margaret volunteered at the school for four weeks during which time she organised a series of workshops designed to train the staff at the ALDS in the use of Numicon (a visual method of teaching and learning Maths). Margaret has supplied the school with the full package of Numicon resources. She also set up the new Library service for the school and taught arts and crafts to the students.



Visit of EDP and opening of 'Lydia's Place' (Library and Resource Room)

We also had a visit from some members of the **Ethiopian Deaf Project (EDP)** a voluntary group from Cork, who work exceptionally hard to support the running and development of the deaf school. They came to see first-hand the difference their efforts are making. Among the many resources they brought for the school was a set of beautifully illustrated story books written in both Amharic and English. They are culturally appropriate as the stories are about life in Ethiopia. The illustrations are also a great means of teaching the younger students lots of new signs for things they come across in their everyday environment. The EDP sponsored the setting up of 'Lydia's Place' an alternative and fun place for learning.



Miriam O'Regan (right) from EDP with the Irish Ambassador Ms Sonja Hyland and her husband Mr. Patrick Scott.

First School Outing: Our first ever school outing caused great excitement among the students and teachers. We all packed into a bus and travelled 100km to the only place that could serve a meal for 75 people. The restaurant had swings, roundabouts and there was also an old Ethiopian Airplane parked in the grounds.



The Storyboard of our school outing. The drawings show where we will go, who what we will do etc and helps the younger students learn new signs.



Belay, one of the teachers teaching new signs to some of the students.





Visit from the Irish Ambassador.

On the Friday 8th March we had a visit from the Irish Ambassador to Ethiopia Ms Sonja Hyland and her husband Patrick. The Embassy in Addis has been very supportive of the school. The parents of the students were invited to come and meet the Ambassador, many of them travelled long distances from the interior. During a meeting with they spoke about the problems and

difficulties the deaf children had while living in the rural areas, no school, no friends, no real way of communicating and how the school has transformed not only the life of their child, but changed their own opinion regarding deafness. Many of them were told that their child could not learn and would be nothing but a burden on them. Now they could see how happy their child is and how he/she is learning the same in some cases better than their other children. The one thing they all agreed on was the need for a boarding facility to allow more deaf children from the rural areas to benefit from such an opportunity.



Visit of Cardinal Berhaneyesus CM.

We also had a visit from the Cardinal Berhaneyesus who is also a Vincentian. It was his second time to visit the school. However, the school has tripled in numbers since he was last there. He was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the students and the way the school has expanded to offer so many more deaf children, especially rural children the precious gift of education.



The Irish Ambassador Sonja Hyland and her husband Patrick Scott at the St. Patrick's Day Ball in Addis Ababa.

St. Patrick's Day Gala Ball.

The ALDS was a chosen beneficiary of the annual St Patrick's Day Gala Ball in Addis Ababa.

The Ambassador spoke to the 650 guests about her visit to the school the previous day which generated a little awareness on the night and allowed us to get busy networking, collecting business cards, engaging people about the work of the Deaf school. We did



The Ambo Deaf School - Boarding Facility Project

The Irish Ambassador with Fr. Stephen Monaghah CM and members of the Cork EDP team visit Mogor College, where the Boarding Facility will be located.

We have launched our fundraising drive for the Boarding Facility Project which will allow us to provide access to education to over 160 deaf children from the rural districts. The majority of these deaf children have never been to school, live very isolated lives, are

stigmatised by their disability and are sometimes shunned by their communities. It's an ambitious project and will require a great deal of effort to secure the funding required to build such a facility. So we are enormously grateful to Mary, Derek and Conor Duggan who have kick started this initiative by donating the proceeds from the **Shane Duggan Memorial Rugby Tournament**. The tournament raised in excess of €20,000.

We are also hugely grateful to the Castleknock College Pastmen's Union who are committed to funding the Boarding School to the sum of €30,000 (€6,000 per year over the next five years). We also appreciate their support in promoting VLM fundraising activities among their members. We are delighted that Mr Fintan Cooney, President of the Union will visit Ambo during the summer. He will receive a very warm welcome and get a chance to see first-hand the difference that Castleknock College is making to this Vincentian Mission in Ethiopia.

Schools Immersion Programmes

Fr Asfaw, Fr. Stephen and Liddith (The cook who puts her heart and soul into caring for the boys during their stay here in Ambo) are looking forward to welcoming this year's group of students. The excitement about the Summer Programme is already building among the children and youths here in the village.



Liddith



The Castleknock Boys 2018 visit to the Leprosy Project