

HANTI SIDRA ONE GLOBAL FAMILY

REPORT FROM AFRICA 2016



**The start of a new life
in a new place**

Scattering seeds of hope on harsh soil

IF we get any reports at all from Eritrea or South Sudan on the news media, they are almost always bad news. Harsh repression in Eritrea; thousands of young people escaping, only to be caught by human traffickers, or drowned while on overloaded, unseaworthy boats in the Mediterranean. South Sudan lurching from one insane war to another, leaving millions of people dead, displaced or starving.

In February-March of 2016, my wife Stephanie and I returned to visit these two countries after an absence of more than four years. We wanted to see conditions there for ourselves, as well as reconnect with good friends who work on projects with backing from you, the supporters of *Hanti Sidra One Global Family*.

We found that life is indeed difficult for people. In South Sudan, where we visited first, we were "stranded" in the capital city, Juba, for several days because there were no flights to the Aweil area where our projects are located.

Juba is a city of contrasts--luxurious hotels, many owned by Eritreans, side by side with extreme poverty. Also, while it was peaceful, although chaotic in our experience, there is considerable violence, often directed at business people from neighboring countries.

While we were staying at a small, low budget hotel, the brother of an Ethiopian worker we got to know there was murdered in his

home. There was no police investigation, only a simple funeral and the body was sent home.

In Eritrea, everything was calm, at least as we saw it. Despite high inflation, food was plentiful in the markets and priced reasonably.

What we noticed most in both countries was the extreme resilience of people. Life is a struggle, but people carry on and try to maintain a sense of normalcy. They've been through this before and they know how to cope.

In the housing developments built by Pan Aweil Development Agency, our South Sudanese partner, thousands of refugees and internally displaced people are now living where there was no one only a couple of years ago. The children shown on the front cover are beginning new lives in one of these settlements. Trees, like the one they smile behind, are being planted everywhere, with protective barriers to keep goats from eating them.

Will these signs of new life eventually blossom into something productive and beautiful? Only time will tell. For now, they signal hope for better lives.

We are full of admiration for the determination of people in Eritrea and South Sudan who make the most of life in extremely difficult situations. The least we can do is give them a little assistance. We invite you to join us. ♦

Dennis Schroeder

Who we are; what we are trying to do

It all started in 1992, when we, Stephanie and Dennis Schroeder, visited Eritrea, a land in the Horn of Africa devastated by three decades of war and frequent droughts. Fighting had ended just a few months before we arrived there.

Our initial search was for a small orphanage where we could sponsor all of the children. We found it at St. Joseph's School in Keren. We also found people in Canada who shared our interest in developing friendships with Eritreans and assisting them in their struggle to create better lives for themselves and their children.

Our group began as the B.C. branch of the *Eritrean Relief Association in Canada* in 1992. Two years later, we reorganized as the *Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Association of British Columbia (ERRA-BC)*, a non-profit society incorporated in B.C. and registered with the Canada Re-

HANTI SIDRA means "One Family" in the Tigrinya language of Eritrea. It was the name given to the first group of orphans we supported there. Since our supporters and beneficiaries of support live in many countries around the world, we are now truly "One Global Family".

venue Agency as a charitable organization. In 2008, we changed our name to *Hanti Sidra One Global Family*.

During our 24 years of operation, we have spent almost \$1.6 million (see back page) on a variety of projects in Eritrea, South Sudan and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. A summary of projects appears on these pages.

All of the above mentioned funds have been contributed by people who believe in the value of the work being done. None is from governments. All of the money donated goes directly to our colleagues who do the work we support in Eritrea and South Sudan.

We continue to visit Africa as often as possible to strengthen our ties of friendship and to observe the programs and projects we are supporting.

In Canada, we have been blessed to have committed support from many people. They volunteer their time and talents for fundraisers; they make generous financial contributions; they hold prayer sessions in times of crisis. Thank you. This work would not have been possible without your support. ♦

HANTI SIDRA ONE GLOBAL FAMILY

Board of Directors

Ghebremedhin Abbai

Gary Koett

Lynn Koett

Patricia Gale-MacDonald

Dennis Schroeder

Stephanie Schroeder

Active Volunteers

Dozens

Contributors

Hundreds

Email: hantisidra@gmail.com

Our work continues despite restrictions

WHEN we (Stephanie and Dennis Schroeder) returned to Eritrea in February 2016, it was an opportunity for us to compare conditions there with the situation when we last visited about four years earlier.

We were already well aware of the many restrictions--on travel, on imports and trade, on construction, on currency exchanges, and on national service for indefinite periods.

For foreigners like ourselves, travel is still complicated. Applications for entry visas can take several months. Our applications have always been approved, apparently because we are "friends of Eritrea". Travel is difficult and expensive. This year, only three international airlines were landing in Asmara. Entry at the airport was better this time. There was no searching of

suitcases or requirement to declare foreign currency holdings.

Inside the country there are still restrictions on travelling outside the capital city, Asmara. Permits take about a day to process. We did not encounter any checkpoints while travelling this time.

Private businesses have difficulty getting import or trading licences. They also have restricted access to foreign currency.

Just before we went to Eritrea, the government, in an attempt to eliminate the black market in currency exchanges, replaced the old Nakfa with a new currency, also called Nakfa. There are also now restrictions on the amount of cash anyone can take from the bank. The black market has not disappeared but the cost of dollars has dropped.

One positive effect was that local, non imported food was cheaper and available in abundance at markets.

There appeared to be virtually no construction going on, a big contrast from neighboring countries. In fact we saw only houses demolished by local authorities because they were built without proper permits.

For us the restrictions were a minor and temporary inconvenience. But our Eritrean friends must deal with them every day.

Given our limited resources, we can only do a little to help some unfortunate Eritreans. Nevertheless, we continue to try to find ways to assist them. ♦

Brother Ghebreyesus Habte (right) head of the De la Salle Brothers in Africa, with Filmon Habte, one of our Hanti Sidra orphans who was only 4 years old when we first met in 1993.



Even in darkness there is some light

COMPARED with Eritrea, South Sudan has very few restrictions that are enforced. It's relatively easy to get into the country, but once there you stay at your own risk.

Since we were last in South Sudan, a major internal war erupted, causing deaths of thousands of people, displacement of millions and destruction of towns and villages.

When we arrived in February, a peace agreement had been negotiated. Plans for an interim government had been prepared but nothing had yet been implemented.

Juba continues to boom, with gleaming office buildings and hotels rising up out of the surrounding rubble.

In Aweil, the capital of our "home" state, we saw new houses, businesses and private schools, and main streets were paved. Our contact in South Sudan, William Kolong Pioth, head of Pan Aweil Development Agency (PADA), is safe, along with his family.

But production of oil, almost the only export and virtually the only source of income for the government, has been greatly reduced because of the global surplus of oil and low prices. That means teachers, health workers and others are not being paid regularly, imports are expensive and there are shortages and high prices for almost everything.

The UN and most aid agencies have suspended funding for projects until the political situation is

clarified and there is actual peace. This has affected PADA, our local partner. There are very few contracts to bid on this year.



William Kolong Pioth, our contact in South Sudan, at home in Aweil with his wife, Adut, daughter Awek, and son Kuot.

Nevertheless, projects funded by *Hanti Sidra One Global Family* and managed by PADA are continuing. We met many of the families working in the women's livelihood project and people living in the new housing built by PADA. They exhibited great joy and enthusiasm and were working hard to improve their lives. They truly are a light in the surrounding darkness and a sign of hope for a better future. ♦

ERITREA

Hanti Sidra began its support of projects in Eritrea in 1992. Since then, a total of nearly \$1 million, plus untold hours of volunteer labour, have been spent. A brief summary of work done there appears on these two pages.

Schools, education

WE have supported dozens of kindergartens (preschools for children aged 4-6) run by the Santa Anna Sisters, Comboni Sisters, Daughters of Charity, and De la Salle Brothers in Keren, Shinara, Afabet, Halibmentel, Dekemhare, Acrur and elsewhere. There has been financial support, together with large amounts of supplies and learning materials. Stephanie has also conducted numerous training workshops for the sisters, as well as for the Eritrean Ministry of Education.

We have supported primary and secondary schools run by the De la Salle Brothers in Keren, Shinara and Hagaz, the Santa Anna Sisters in Keren and Acrur, and the Catholic Eparchy of Keren in Faraleba, Hagaz and Shaqloti. The financial support ranged from school fees for students from poor families, to a new library, washroom facilities, agricultural projects, building renovations, new desks and school equipment. In addition, volunteers taught at St. Joseph's School. Dennis also provided training in textbook production for the Ministry of Education.

Students who do not have electricity in their homes are able to study in school libraries and classrooms in the evenings. Apart from making space available to students in existing schools, we have assisted

in construction and operation of study centres in Afabet, Halibmentel, Adi Teklezan, and the Institute for Religious Studies, a post-secondary school in Asmara.

Financial contributions for schools, kindergartens and study centres from 1992 to the end of 2015 totalled \$355,000. About \$9,000 is budgeted to be spent in 2016.

Workers harvest oranges from the orchards at Feledareb Clinic's agricultural compound.



Clinics and health

WE have a long-standing relationship with a clinic run by the Capuchin Sisters at Feledareb. It serves 11 surrounding villages, as well as people who come from much greater distances. Financial support has been used for medical supplies and equipment, as well as water cisterns, food production and some operating costs. Total spending since 1992 has been about \$61,000. In 2016, \$1,500 is budgeted for Feledareb.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

St. Joseph's School in Keren, operated by the De la Salle Brothers, has about 1,700 students in Grades 1-11. It is consistently one of the top 3 or 4 schools in Eritrea. Even more impressive, it is the only one of those top schools open to all students, regardless of religion, ethnic background or family income.



Poor families, orphans

WE have always set aside funds to help families that are destitute or facing special emergencies. We also assist refugees and women who are trying to get started with small business enterprises. We helped the twins, Fethi and Ghinbar, while they were in a UN refugee camp in Ethiopia, and for the first few months after their arrival in Canada. More recently, we have supported Eritrean refugees living in Nairobi, Kenya and trying to get an education or move on elsewhere. We assisted numerous poor women and disabled war veterans to make a new start in life. Total spending since 1992 is nearly \$100,000. About \$2,000 is budgeted for 2016.

In addition, we began to support a group of 83 war orphans known as "Hanti Sidra" in 1993. We helped them while they were in school, also after they completed school. Since 1992, we provided more than \$223,000 for orphans.

Comboni Sisters

WHEN our good friend Sister Thomas went to the Muslim town of Afabet in the late 1990s with three other Comboni Sisters, we began to support their programs there. These included women's promotion, a kindergarten, and a multi-purpose learning centre. Over 15 years, *Hanti Sidra* contributed more than \$98,000. Sister Thomas is now at the Comboni mother house in Asmara, in charge of project development. We have given her \$1,500 this year for a small project of her choice.

Water, other support

WE have given \$65,000 in assistance to schools and clinics by funding the drilling of wells, the capture and storage of rainwater, crop irrigation, and the purchase of geological survey equipment.

We also spent over \$18,000 on two container shipments to Eritrea in the early 1990s. ♦

SOUTH SUDAN

HANTI SIDRA began its involvement in South Sudan by helping a former "Lost Boy", William Kolong Pioth, to return from Vancouver to his home village in 2007. While there he was able to get a well installed. The following year, we sent him to the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology in Calgary for training in the manufacture of biosand water filters. Now he is head of Pan Aweil Development Agency (PADA), our partner in South Sudan. By the end of 2015, Hanti Sidra had provided \$616,000 to PADA for projects summarized on these two pages.

Village livelihood project

THIS project began modestly in 2011, when village women in the Majok Adim district said they would like to grow vegetables during the dry season when supplies of the staple crop, sorghum had been used up and their children were hungry.

In the first dry season, about a dozen women joined the project, working cooperatively, growing onions, tomatoes, okra, spinach and other vegetables in an enclosed garden compound, irrigated with water brought in buckets from a nearby swampy area.

Five years later, virtually all the women, as well as the men and children, in the seven villages of Majok Adim, with over 1,000 households and a population of about 7,000, are participating.

To begin with, PADA with funding from *Hanti Sidra One Global Family*, purchased a couple of hydraulic pumps and hoses to bring water to the gardens, as well as seeds and garden tools.

Beginning in 2015, it was decided to replace the gas-powered pumps with treadle pumps and to

introduce a seed bank project to cut the cost of importing seeds and gradually develop locally produced plants.

For 2016, the plan is to purchase 10 treadle pumps, larger numbers of watering cans, hoes, shovels and wheel barrows, and some seeds which are still necessary.

PADA has requested about \$39,000 US for the expansion of this project. We are fundraising to help keep it going.

One of the enclosed garden plots where villagers are growing vegetables during the dry season.



SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

Education, schools

SINCE 2010, PADA has built three primary schools in Majok Adim boma (district) to service more than 1,500 school age children.

The first, Maluil School, with nine rooms in two buildings, was completed in 2010. The second, Majok Adim School, with five classrooms, was completed in 2012. The third, Mabiior School, with four classrooms, was completed in 2014. A well, latrines and kitchens were added to each school compound.

Villagers provided most of the labor and supplied bricks in a program called "Bricks for Filters" where they "bought" a biosand water filter made by PADA for 600 bricks.

In 2015, strong winds damaged the roof of Majok Adim School. It was necessary to replace half of the roof, and repairs to one of the wells had to be done this year. We have paid about \$16,000 for these repairs.

Regarding education of the children, the political and economic situation in South Sudan has had a negative impact. Government activities have almost ground to a complete halt. Teachers are not paid regularly and they cannot work more than part time.

Many private schools are springing up to fill the gap. PADA is considering converting Majok Adim School to a private academy. A final decision has not been made.

To date, we have spent more than \$330,000 on schools and education in Majok Adim.



PADA, with a contract from UN Habitat, built 270 houses in three settlements for returning refugees in 2014-15. The returnees would first build makeshift houses (above). They would then move into the modest but adequate new houses (below).



Clean water, wells

WE have provided PADA with over \$124,000 to date for projects related to bringing clean water to people. In 2016, we have provided funding to repair one of the seven wells in Majok Adim.

In future, villagers will pay a small monthly fee for water from the wells. The money will be used for well and pump repairs. ♦

DONATIONS

Five ways you can make a donation

- Write a cheque or money order made out to *HANTI SIDRA FUND* and mail it to our address shown on the back page. You will receive an official tax receipt for any donation of \$20.00 or more. You can designate a specific project or direct your donation to Eritrea or South Sudan.
- Make a cash donation. Tax receipts are not normally issued. But if you put \$20.00 or more into one of our cash donation envelopes and fill out the required information on the envelope, you will be issued a tax receipt.
- Arrange with us to have monthly, quarterly or other regular contributions of a specified amount debited from your bank account. Provide us with a void cheque with your banking information and instructions on the amount and frequency of debits you would like us to make. You will receive one tax receipt at year-end for your total donations during the year.
- Make an electronic payment by setting up an Interac E-Transfer through your bank with an email notification sent to us at hantisidra@gmail.com. In a separate email, let us know the answer to your security question, as well as your mailing address, so we can mail your tax receipt to you.
- Make a donation by credit card through www.canadahelps.org. If you search for Hanti Sidra on their website, it comes up under our old name "Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Association of B.C." After you make your online donation, a cheque is forwarded to us. A tax receipt for the full amount of your donation is issued to you by CanadaHelps. Please be aware that they hold back a fee of about 5% of your donation from the amount remitted to us. ♦

Make a special event more special

Have you ever tried to find a gift for a person who doesn't need anything? Why not buy a Hanti Sidra Gift Card? We offer a group of themed cards that allow you to make a donation of \$20.00 or a larger amount of your choice to one of our projects in Africa in the name of a friend or loved one. Since the time and materials for the production of the cards are donated, you receive a tax receipt for the full amount of your contribution. Most of the cards are sold at Christmas, but they can be used, and customized if necessary, for any occasion--birthdays, graduations, weddings, memoriams, other occasions, etc. Contact us at hantisidra@gmail.com for more information or to order cards. ♦

ABOUT ERITREA AND SOUTH SUDAN

ERITREA AT A GLANCE

Location: Northeastern Africa.

Boundaries: Red Sea to the east, Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the south, Djibouti to the southeast.

Total land area: 121,320 sq. km., roughly the size of England.

Coastline: 1,094 km. along Red Sea.

Climate: Hot and dry, especially in lowland areas. Frequent droughts.

Political history: Former Italian colony, federated with Ethiopia in 1952, and forcefully annexed by Ethiopia in 1962. Liberated from Ethiopia in 1991 after 30-year struggle. Renewed war with Ethiopia in 1998-2000. Issues not resolved.

Independence: May 24, 1993.

Population: About 5 million, 75% in rural areas. Many others abroad.

Religions: Most Orthodox Christian or Muslim. Some Catholics, Protestants, animists.

Languages: Tigrinya and Tigre (80%), and 7 other minorities.

SOUTH SUDAN AT A GLANCE

Location: Northeastern Africa.

Boundaries: Northern Sudan to the north, Ethiopia to the east, Kenya, Uganda, Congo to the south, Central African Republic to the southwest.

Total land area: 620,000 sq. km., a bit smaller than Alberta or Texas.

Coastline: None.

Climate: Hot and humid, especially near rivers and swamps. Plentiful rainfall, frequent flooding.

Political history: Former Anglo-Egyptian colony. Peace agreement with northern Sudan after 22-year civil war. Large scale internal fighting broke out in late 2013.

Independence: July 9, 2011.

Population: Over 10 million, 90% in rural areas. Up to 2 million displaced by recent fighting.

Religions: Mostly Christians and traditional African beliefs.

Languages: multiple ethnic groups. Official language English.



How your contributions were used

ACCUMULATED REVENUES, EXPENDITURES & RESERVES SINCE OUR ESTABLISHMENT IN 1992 (\$C)

	2015	1992-2015
REVENUE		
Fundraisers	2,135.00	95,765.43
Charitable donations	98,260.22	981,635.18
Charitable bequests	-----	217,914.71
Gifts from organizations	2,000.00	276,004.14
Interest/other contributions	1,473.14	84,284.09
TOTAL	103,868.36	1,655,603.55
EXPENDITURES		
Eritrea		
One Family orphans	-----	223,461.38
Schools/Kindergartens	12,608.07	317,006.60
Afabet/Comboni Community	2,166.45	98,584.25
Study centres/Students	1,444.30	67,399.50
Poor families/refugees/women	2,888.60	99,575.41
Clinics	2,166.45	61,022.27
Water development	-----	65,565.25
Container shipments	-----	18,323.50
South Sudan		
Water development	-----	135,760.42
Schools, infrastructure	-----	331,273.71
Health care, women	23,947.57	106,856.64
Local partner support	11,051.51	20,260.71
Promotions/Administration	877.13	22,145.92
TOTAL	57,150.08	1,567,235.56
RESERVES--FUTURE PROJECTS	46,718.28	88,367.99

JOIN THE FAMILY!

*If you would like to support the good work being done in Eritrea or
South Sudan, send a donation for any amount to:*

**HANTI SIDRA ONE GLOBAL FAMILY
PO Box 20004, Sidney, BC V8L 5C9**

*See page 10 for more information about making a contribution.
Canada Revenue Agency registration #89016 9063 RR0001*