

HANTI SIDRA ONE GLOBAL FAMILY

REPORT FROM AFRICA 2011



**Two decades after Eritrea,
another new nation is born**

Attending the births of two new nations

IN March 1992, Stephanie and I visited Eritrea for the first time. We saw a country badly damaged, its people suffering from a long war that ended less than a year earlier.

A year later, Eritreans voted in a referendum on independence and we served as official observers at a polling station for Eritreans in Victoria. On May 24, 1993, exactly two years after the war ended, Eritrea became an independent state.

Now, in a different part of northeast Africa, we are seeing first hand the same thing in South Sudan.

There are some similarities. Eritrea won its independence in a long and bitter struggle with neighboring Ethiopia that lasted 30 years. In the referendum, more than 99% voted for independence, a measure of how desperately they wanted out of the forced union.

In Sudan, there were two long civil wars. The first began shortly after Sudan's independence from Britain in 1956. The second lasted for 22 years until the peace agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005.

South Sudan's referendum was held in January 2011 and, like Eritrea, the vote was over 99% in favor of independence from northern Sudan. Independence day is July 9, 2011, exactly six years after the CPA was signed.

There were also differences. Eritrea inherited a modern infrastructure from the Italian colonial power, but much of it was dismantled

or decayed under Ethiopian rule. Eritreans resented being part of an ancient, almost feudal empire, even though they share language, culture and religion with their neighbors.

South Sudan was systematically isolated and underdeveloped for many decades and there was virtually no infrastructure. Predominantly Christian and animist Africans, they strongly resented being ruled by the Arab, Muslim north.

Although Eritrea still ranks among the least developed countries, it started out with more educated and skilled people. While the South Sudanese people are starting out at a disadvantage, their land is potentially rich. They have large reserves of oil, and the waters of the White Nile and other rivers make it potentially a major producer of food and other agricultural products.

Hanti Sidra will continue to be involved in both countries but, given the differences, our approach will probably be different. We invite you to join us in supporting the people trying to make a new start in both countries. ♦

Dennis Schroeder

COVER PICTURE

Students at Maluil School in South Sudan celebrated the opening of their new school building in 2010. It was constructed with support from Hanti Sidra. A year later, they were celebrating the birth of a new nation.

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 Canadians 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 Revenue



Former director Peter Yearwood (left) chats with president Ghebremedhin Abbai at a fundraiser.

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

During our 19 years of operation, we have spent almost \$950,000 (see back page) on a variety of projects in Eritrea, Sudan and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. Some of those projects are described 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. And all of it goes directly to those doing the work in Africa--none is used for salaries, travel or administration.

We continue to visit Africa each year 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

Remembering Tesfaldet

In October 2009, our good friend Tesfaldet Andemariam, one of Eritrea's few hydrogeologists, was brutally murdered by terrorists while on his way to work at a gold mine site in northern Eritrea.

He left behind his wife, three daughters and a son. We met them in Asmara just over a year later.

We had worked with Tesfaldet on several projects and had provided geological survey equipment that he used in his work.

We have decided to support his family which was left destitute after his death. *Hanti Sidra* will pay the house rent and also the school fees for the children.

We have also set up a scholarship fund in Tesfaldet's memory

Tesfaldet's widow Mihret with their 3 daughters. Left to right, Selihom, 5 years, Rotas, 10 years, and Saron, 18 months. Their son, Siem, age 8, was not present.



to help a young person pursuing studies and working in a similar field. The first recipient is Amanuel Michael, a civil engineer. The scholarship will help him complete a masters degree in water resource management. See pages 6-7 for more about his work. ◆

The library is finished!



Sister Letteberhan (left) proudly shows the new library.

When we visited Santa Anna School in Keren in 2009, a new library was on the wish list of Sister Letteberhan, the headmistress. She hoped to scrape together funding a bit at a time, eventually enclosing part of the verandah surrounding the school building and converting it into a library.

Hanti Sidra contributed some funds and encouraged her to be patient. When we returned a year later, we were surprised and delighted to see that the library was completed.

Now she is hard at work on the next item on her wish list--new washrooms for the school. ◆

Reunions of One Family

Every year since the Schroeders lived with them at St. Joseph's School in Keren in 1996-97, the group of orphans who call themselves Hanti Sidra ("One Family" in the Tigrinya language) get together with either Stephanie or Dennis when they visit Eritrea for a family reunion.

In 2010, both Stephanie and Dennis were there together for the first time in 13 years. One reunion in Asmara was attended by more than 20 of the original 81 orphans, along with numerous children. A smaller reunion in Keren was attended by about a half dozen. ♦



Stephanie is surrounded by the grown orphans and some of the "grandchildren" at the Asmara gathering.

Acrur kindergartens

Sister Haregu reported on work we support at the small village of Acrur where she heads the Santa Anna community. There are now about 300 children at six village kindergartens in the area. ♦

Afabet gets supplies



Sister Thomas (right) celebrates early Christmas with Stephanie. Items for the multipurpose centre, kindergarten and women's program at the Comboni Sisters' compound in Afabet were given to her. Thomas has worked at Afabet, a predominantly Muslim town in the northern Sahel region of Eritrea, since the mid-1990s.

Dekemhare impressive

We have supported the work of Sister Lettemariam of the Daughters of Charity for many years. She is now working in the Asmara office of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CANEWA) and also completing a bachelor's degree at the Institute of Religious Studies, in association with the Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi.

She remains actively involved in work at Dekemhare, 45 km south of Asmara. We saw the beautiful campus where 360 kindergarten students and 1,320 primary and junior school students, all from very poor families, are being educated. ♦

Conducting a search for better ways

WHEN Hagaz Agro-Technical School began operation in 1999, it was a remarkable achievement. Operated by the de la Salle Brothers of Eritrea, it was the brainchild of Br. Amilcare Boccuccia, an Italian native who had lived and worked in Eritrea since the 1960s.

Located at the edge of the town of Hagaz in the hot, semi-arid lowlands of west central Eritrea, the prospects for agricultural production at the school did not seem very promising.

But under Amilcare's guidance, the school flourished. The academic program took in up to 300 students a year, offering both secondary school and post-secondary courses in plant, water, soil and animal sciences and agro-mechanics. There were also extension programs and micro-credit for area farmers, financed partly by *Hanti Sidra* funding. The school has a beautiful, well stocked library, a chemistry laboratory and a computer room equal or

superior to anything in the country.

In addition, Amilcare developed the agricultural potential of the 40-hectare complex, creating citrus groves, grape vineyards, a guava plantation, and experimented with various other plants, dairy cattle and poultry. He also established several food processing plants, including a dairy and cheese factory, a winery and a jam factory.

The dry land was irrigated from seven wells, drawing from subsurface water below the normally dry Boggu river on the southern boundary of the school property.

When the wells started going dry from over use by the school and the burgeoning town of Hagaz, Amilcare made another brilliant move. He created Eritrea's first underground dam beneath the river, using jet-grout injection technology to sink a row of concrete columns down to bedrock at a narrowing point in the river bed. After several years, the

Civil engineer Amanuel Michael (left), meets with Dennis and Br. Tinsiew Tesfaslasie, the project manager at Hagaz Agro-Technical School.



to realize great agricultural potential



The Hagaz nursery produces seedlings for transplanting to the fields at Hagaz and for use by neighboring farmers.

expanding aquifer started to increase the amount of water available.

In 2005, a major crisis hit the school. Amilcare, its founder and driving force, was expelled from Eritrea.

The de la Salle Brothers did their best to fill the enormous gap. The academic program has changed as a result of government policies. The school is now one of seven designated secondary-level technical schools in Eritrea. Student numbers are back up to about 300 and the operations are well managed under current headmaster Br. Woldehawariat.

The agricultural programs have suffered. Br. Tinsiew Tesfaslasie, who was appointed project manager, was also hit with the departure of some other key personnel. He has struggled to create some order out of the confusion, but there have been setbacks in production, both on the fields and in processing.

A consultant with an accounting background was hired to establish management and accounting systems and

create clear documentation and operational manuals.

Hanti Sidra has contributed to the restructuring process by paying the cost of another consultant, Amanuel Michael, an Eritrean expert in water resource management.

Amanuel, who is one of our One Family orphans, has degrees in civil engineering and water resource engineering. He has worked on, and supervised, several major projects, including dams, agricultural projects, urban water supply and waste water management.

In late 2010, Amanuel, together with an agricultural expert, began a detailed study of the current operations and problems at Hagaz, emphasizing water usage, the irrigation system and plant development. We passed his draft report on to Erich Schulz, one of the leading irrigation experts in British Columbia, for comments and suggestions.

The final report should be completed before mid-2011. Hopefully, the recommendations will help improve water use and agricultural productivity at Hagaz. ♦

A worker examines the grape plants at Hagaz.



SOUTH SUDAN

Helping South Sudan make a new start

IN January 2011, one of the most important events in the history of Sudan occurred. Nearly four million people, almost the entire adult population of the southern third of the country, voted in a UN-sponsored referendum in Sudan and eight other countries around the world, including Canada. The vote was overwhelming, about 99% in favor of freedom from northern Sudan. On Independence Day, July 9, 2011, Africa's largest country by land area splits in two, and the world's newest nation is born.

South Sudan faces massive problems. It has over nine million people, most of whom are desperately poor, illiterate and only recently returned to their destroyed villages from refugee camps. There are few roads, schools, clinics or other infrastructure. But there is hope for a better future. The people are determined to show the world they can succeed against the odds.

Hanti Sidra One Global Family got involved in South Sudan in 2009. We partnered with a local non-governmental organization, *Pan Aweil Development Inc.*, headed by William Kolong Pioth, a Sudanese Canadian from Burnaby BC. He was one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan", children as young as six years old who escaped from the carnage and destruction of their homes in the 1980s by walking 1,000 km, first to Ethiopia, then to Kenya. Many did not survive. He returned to his home boma (district) of Majok Adim, a grouping of seven villages, strongly committed to help rebuild the devastated community. Some of our projects are described here.

Maluil Primary School

Given the strong desire to make up for lost educational opportunities, many new schools have sprung up in South Sudan since the 2005 peace agreement. But because of a lack of funding, most are makeshift schools under the trees. When it rains, classes are cancelled.

Now, with financial support from *Hanti Sidra*, the 480 students at Maluil Primary School can attend classes under a roof. The two-building complex has eight classrooms and an office/staff room. Residents of the local community, with help from *Pan Aweil Development*, were active participants in the school's



William addresses students at the official opening of the not yet completed Maluil Primary School.

planning, construction and now its operation. The school was in use by May 2010, even before the buildings were completely finished. ♦

SOUTH SUDAN

A little girl's suffering

When the Majok Adim Walk In Clinic, financed by *Hanti Sidra*, opened in January 2010, it was overwhelmed with as many as 1,500 patients per day. The vast majority of them had never been checked by a doctor.

One was a 10-year-old girl, Ayuen Deng, who suffers from elephantiasis, a disfiguring and painful disease that results in enormous swelling, often in one or both legs. It is caused by a parasite that enters the body via mosquito bites. Hair-thin worms invade the lymphatic system and multiply there. Ayuen, whose right leg is affected, has suffered since infancy.

We arranged to send Ayuen to a hospital in the large town of Wau for diagnosis and treatment. She has begun to respond positively to the treatment.

We need to raise funds to help little Ayuen eventually lead a normal life. We would also like to help prevent others from contracting this disease. ♦

Ayuen (seated), with some of her siblings and neighbours.



Stephanie poses with some members of the women's committee at a meeting under the trees.

Women start enterprise

For independence to have true meaning in South Sudan, people at the village level have to take control of their destinies and participate in development of their communities.

The Majok Adim women's committee is doing that. With assistance from *Pan Aweil Development* and *Hanti Sidra*, they have created irrigated vegetable plots to grow crops during the dry season.

They have also set up a small food produce shop and restaurant in the nearby market town of Marial Bai to sell their products.

At the women's request, *Pan Aweil Development* is also planning to purchase and train oxen to plough the land. ♦

For more information about our projects in South Sudan, please check for update reports online. Go to *Report from South Sudan* at panaweil.blogspot.com

Finally, good rains...and good crops?

ERITREA is frequently described as a semi-arid, or drought-prone, country. Some years there is virtually no rain at all. In the past decade, there was a run of about 5 years like that. Other years, it rains but at the wrong time or there are occasional heavy downpours that wash everything away.

In 2010, the main rainy season, called *kremti*, began on time in June and continued through August. Most parts of the country got rain in adequate amounts, in fact, well above the average for the past 15 years.

Most parts of eastern Africa received good rainfall in 2010. In the area of southern Sudan where *Hanti Sidra* is supporting projects, there was too much rain. Rivers there normally overflow their banks at that time of year, but in 2010 there was disastrous flooding. Some people died in the swift moving water; crops were washed away; and thousands of homes were destroyed. Emergency aid had to be airlifted to people stranded in some flooded areas.

In Eritrea, where the rains were more benign, farmers planted cereal crops such as sorghum, millet and maize, on which Eritreans depend for survival, and hoped for the best. There was talk of a bumper crop.

The crops were harvested in November and they appeared to be good. The final numbers were not available at yearend, but the prices of grains such as barley, millet and sorghum had dropped significantly by then. Certainly, there was cause for optimism.

However, at best, one good year

would only help to replenish storage units depleted in previous years. There were hopes for a good crop in 2009, but the *kremti* rains ended too early. As a result, the harvest was only 170,000 tonnes, less than a third of the 595,000 tonnes required for 2010. Together with 2009 imports not consumed, the total amount of cereal grains available for 2010 was 273,000 tonnes. About 296,000 tonnes were imported, leaving a need for 26,000 tonnes of food aid.



Eritrean villagers tend to crops as harvest time approaches.

With a good 2010 harvest, there may be no need for food aid and commercial imports could be reduced.

For Eritrea to even approach self-sufficiency in food production, agricultural productivity needs to be increased through improved farming methods. There must be more conservation of scarce water. Also, irrigation must be used more extensively to supplement unpredictable rainfall.

These are high priorities for the Eritrean government and people. We are trying to help them in small ways to achieve these long term goals. ♦

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: 124,320 sq. km., about 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 4 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: 660,000 sq. km., about the size of Alberta.
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.
Independence: July 9, 2011.
Population: Over 9 million, 90% in rural areas. Possibly 2 million in northern Sudan and others abroad.
Religions: Mostly Christians and traditional African beliefs.
Languages: Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Bari, Zande; 200 ethnic groups. Official language English.



How your contributions were used

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

	2010	1992-2010
REVENUE		
Fundraisers	3,723.96	77,783.98
Charitable donations	45,436.15	649,123.36
Charitable bequests	-----	207,914.71
Gifts from organizations	41,320.53	159,064.38
Interest/other	6,317.10	76,589.54
TOTAL	96,797.74	1,170,475.97
EXPENDITURES		
Eritrea		
One Family orphans	6,959.06	223,461.38
Schools/Kindergartens	21,592.01	219,439.66
Afabet Comboni Community	8,854.72	73,949.02
Study centres/Students	3,405.67	54,056.02
Poor families/refugees/women	7,308.50	75,864.85
Clinics	6,130.20	37,696.20
Water development	-----	27,392.46
Container shipments	-----	18,323.50
South Sudan		
Water development	21,506.40	90,487.22
Schools	63,146.43	63,146.43
Clinic	19,590.30	52,315.68
Promotions/Administration	595.46	10,108.49
TOTAL	159,088.75	946,240.91
RESERVES--FUTURE PROJECTS	(62,291.01)	224,235.06

JOIN THE FAMILY!

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

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

*Please make your cheque out to **HANTI SIDRA FUND**. An official tax receipt will be issued for any donation of \$20.00 or more.*