



72 Hazel Ave.
Mill Valley, CA 94941
www.commonriver.org

FACT SHEET

A US-based 501(c) 3 grass roots community development organization
Non-governmental, non-profit, non-tribal, non-sectarian, non-political: **PRO**-Community
In Ethiopia aka **Bekele's Blessings Center of Learning**

Location: Titira (kebele) in Aleta Wondo (woreda) in Sidama (zone) of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). Major coffee growing region of the Great Rift Valley, 300 kilometers south of Addis Ababa.

Beneficiaries: Coffee farming families: pop. 8,000

Co-founded by: Tsegaye Bekele and Donna Sillan, MPH

Tsegaye, a California resident since 1976, was born and raised in Aleta Wondo. His parents were co-founders of the town in the 40's and produced enterprises, which employed hundreds of people. This legacy was never forgotten and their good will has greatly facilitated the return of their son to assist in the development of the community that raised him. **Donna** is an int'l public health consultant who has worked for the major NGOs for the past 31 years in 35 countries and has found her village in Aleta Wondo. She specializes in community nutrition and preventive health behavioral change.

Start-up: Feasibility study conducted in 2007 through facilitating grass roots focus groups discussions with children, women, informal and formal leaders, government officials, religious leaders and seniors. According to the needs of the community, the following sectors were prioritized: Education, Health and Livelihoods.

Mission Statement:

To create balanced, productive and self-sustaining communities for others to witness and replicate, honoring cultural heritage and environmental biodiversity.

Major Interventions:

i. **EDUCATION:**

- Primary school for grades 2-4: 135 students
- Female Literacy Program: 140 women
- School Library and Mobile Donkey Cart Library
- Sidama Senior Council formation
- Summer Camp run by US youth volunteers (academics and sports)

ii. **HEALTH :**

- School lunch program: 150 hot meals served 5 days @ week
- Regular de-worming of students
- Agricultural demonstration garden and animal husbandry (6 cows)
- Nutrition training & Family planning for women and staff
- Univ. of Texas Medical School annual service trip for community health and clinical care
- Sanitation: Constructed 6 school latrines and a hand, tooth and foot washing station
- Water Supply: Dug 5 wells, rain water catchment

iii. **LIVELIHOODS:**

- Export local farmers coffee through a LLC Aleta Wondo Coffee (www.aletawondo.com)

iv. **SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT:**

- Eco-friendly cultural buildings, traditional farming practices, reforestation through tree planting, promoting biodiversity and sustainability.

LOCAL Staff: (15)

Management:

- Program Manager: Tsegaye W.Amanuel
- Finance Manager: Tafessa Mekuria

Faculty:

- Principal: Feleka
- Teachers: Tasfa Alem, Beleta
- Female Literacy teachers: Tesfaye, Mehret

Kitchen:

- Cook Supervisor: Asho
- Cook: Demenkech

Grounds:

- Cleaners: Tsege and Konjit
- Animal Keeper: Amelo
- Guards: Fekadu, Adugna
- Maintenance Supervisor: Asenafi

Contacts:

In Addis:

- Tsehaye Bogale, Country Representative: 0911-226583
- Tarikua W.Michael, translator 0911-517-163

In Aleta Wondo:

- Tsegaye W.Amanuel, Program Manager: 0916-401987
- Tafessa Merkuria, Finance Manager: 0916-160688

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To Do:

1. Please don't forget to sign the quest book and provide us with your feedback. We honor your views.
2. Meet one of our son's Abraham and ask him his story.
3. We also request each visitor to plant a tree in our volunteer garden as part of our reforestation demonstration effort.

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