

## HEART Project in Illubabor Bethel Synod

Although the HEART project was originally designed to provide direct support for HIV/AIDS orphans living on their own or with certain families\*, IBS has begun an alternative project that promotes income generation for supported orphans and/or their caregivers. Individuals who have previously been supported with approximately 50 ETB / month now are running their own businesses. Additional needy individuals are identified through government and hospital referrals. The individuals propose a business plan according to their interest and IBS provides startup costs, including supplies, livestock, physical location of a shop or stand, and building materials. Usually only one orphan in each family is supported due to budget restrictions. Here are their stories:

### GORE



*Samuel poses on the bicycle IBS purchased for him and his brother to rent for income generation.*

In Gore, located about 20 km from Mettu, several different projects have been implemented among supported individuals. The latest, a large general store and packaging shop and a shoeshine stand, are due to open by the end of July.

Buzayehu Alemayehu (15) and Fistum Demise (17) will be running a shoeshine stand right outside the Gore bus station. Both are orphans due to HIV/AIDS. Buzayehu lives with his older brother, who is 20. Working with Buzayehu and Fistum is Samuel Bekele (15). Samuel and his brother Tsegaye (16) live with a certain family. IBS purchased a bicycle for Tsegaye to rent and Samuel and Tsegaye share responsibilities for bicycle renting and shoeshining according to their school schedules.



*This shoeshine stand will support 3 HIV/AIDS orphans*

When the general store opens, it will be run by two orphans, Helen Kuralign (15) and Tigist Brehane (16). Helen is currently living with relatives. Her mother has died from HIV/AIDS and her father is not active in her life. Tigist is living with her grandfather. Four other orphans will be supported by the shop. These orphans range in age from 2-4 years. Their caregivers will participate in working in the shops and they will share the profits with Helen and Tigist. This arrangement is overseen by IBS and a local government office. If caregivers do not participate fully in running the shop, the orphans they live with will still receive support from shop profits, but at a lower level.



*Solomon Shiferew, IBS HIV/AIDS coordinator, stands outside a store in Gore designed to support 6 HIV/AIDS orphans and due to open in late July.*

\* *Certain families* is a term used for families providing shelter for orphans. Although it is often compared to *foster families*, *certain families* provide only a place to sleep. This support does not include food, school fees, uniforms, medical care, etc.

## GORE (cont.)

Addise Dereje (14) lives about 8 km outside of Gore with her five siblings, ages 16, 13, 12, 11, and 9. IBS



*These orphans are rearing sheep to sell in the market and breed. From left to right: Azem, Addise, Abebaw*

has purchased sheep for the family to rear and sell. They would like to support this family further by providing a shop for some of Addise's siblings to work in when budget allows.

Abebaw Abebe (15) also raises sheep that IBS has provided for his family of 6. Abebaw lives outside of Gore with his siblings, ages 25, 22, 20, 13, and 12. Getenet is the family head and additionally supports the family through subsistence farming.

Azem Aliyas (13) lives with her grandparents outside of Gore and is raising sheep provided through the HEART program as well.

## MEDE

In Mede, located about 7 km from Mettu, HEART is supporting 3 siblings who parents who died from HIV/AIDS. Meseret Admasu (8), Getahun Alemu (11), and Tariku Asfaw (13) live with their aunt. IBS has provided a cow for the family to rear. They sell the milk to local hotels.



*Yekaba with a younger sister outside the store located in the front part of their house.*

## TULUBE

Tulube is located about 7 km from Mettu. There, HEART is supporting two families.

Yekaba Getenet (17) is the head of her family of 6. Her brothers and sisters range from age 16 to 7. Both their parents have and their situation was brought to the attention of IBS through a request by the local

administration of Tulube. IBS sup-

ported the family with 50 ETB each month until recently when they have made arrangements to buy supplies to open a general store for income generation. However, even when Yekaba was supported on a small stipend, she was saving her money and putting a new roof on her home in preparation for opening this shop. Her shop will open in late July.



Tarique Demlash (8) lost her mother to HIV/AIDS. She does not know her father. She is currently living with her grandmother, who recently started an injera baking business with the synod's help.

Tarique and her grandmother outside their home.

## METTU

In Mettu, several orphans have opened shops since June. Just outside the Mettu High School compound, IBS has constructed an iron shop with two stores in it. IBS would like to duplicate this kind of construction for other orphans in Mettu and other locataions.

On one side, Melkitu Belachew (16) and Buzayehu Biraahanu (14) have opened a general store. Both girls are in school and can coordinate their schedules along with work. Both live alone and have lost both parents due to HIV/AIDS.



*Melkitu sells goods in her newly opened shop.*



*Tarikwa's newly opened café.*

On the other side, Tarikwa Silesh (14) also sells goods. In addition, she also runs a packaging business in which she take items to her home to be packed into plastic bags. This provides additional income outside of times her store is open. In the last few days, Tarikwa has also added a shelter for daily workers to have coffee or tea from surrounding businesses and projects. Tarikwa is a rising 7th grader. She is living alone with her 8 year old sister. Tarikwa is very industrious and IBS expects that her business will do very well.

On the other side of town, by the hospital, two other shops have recently opened.



*Ayelech in her newly opened store.*

Ayelech Mekonnen's (15) mother died 1 year ago from HIV/AIDS. Ayelech lives alone and just opened her shop three weeks ago. She is currently making about 35-40 ETB (\$4-\$4.50 USD) in gross sales each day. Ayelech recently dropped out of school, where she has completed grade 8, but the HEART program will enable her to support herself enough to attend school in the fall.

Feseha Kasahun (15) and Shabu Shafi (17) have opened a shop just around the corner from Ayelech; both lost their parents to HIV/AIDS. Feseha lives with his 10 year old brother in a certain family. Shabu is the caregiver for his family, supporting two brothers and one sister ages 15,10, and 6. Their parents died several years ago.



*Feseha and Shabu work in their shop, located just outside Mettu hospital.*

## METTU (cont.)

In another part of Mettu, IBS is supporting two orphaned siblings living with their grandmother. Frezer Tibebe (13) and Silenat Frezer (3) are raising a cow. Silenat herself has been diagnosed with HIV.

## HURUMU

In Hurumu, located about 18km from Mettu, 9 orphans will be supported through a double general store due to open in late summer. Orphans above the age of 10 will work in the shop and those younger will be represented by their caregivers. In another venture, IBS has helped an individual living with HIV / AIDS open a shoe shine station. This support was at the request of local officials who have noticed this person is involved in teaching the community about HIV/AIDS risk and caring for those living with HIV/AIDS. The shoe shine stand will support this individual and 1 orphan. This activist is excited about this project because it gives him a central location to talk to many people in the town about this issue. Solomon, of IBS staff, is providing training so that his work may be more effective.



*This is the site for an iron store for income generation similar to those in Mettu.*

Faskia Nadew (5)  
Geremuw Mitiku (16)  
Bereke Worku (6)  
Daniel Worku (8)  
Dereje Esubalew (10)  
Ashagre Esubalew (6)  
Tiruwork Mulugeta (14)  
Mitiku Shelleme (10)  
Dejene Madew (7)

## OTHER ISSUES

Solomon has raised two issues for consideration by the HEART committee.

- 1) It has recently been revealed to the synod that the HIV/AIDS crisis is particularly bad in Bedele, located 120 km from Mettu. This area has a lot of soldiers, hotels, bars, and a beer factory. There is little interest in addressing the issue by local administration. During a recent project there, the “Virginity Beauty Contest” (IBS sponsored this contest, in which girls received HIV/AIDS test and a medical exam by a doctor; if they were determined to be virgins and HIV/AIDS free, they were rewarded in front of their community), IBS was made aware of the great need to care for orphans and those living with HIV/AIDS. Any possible expansion of the HEART project may be in this area.
- 2) Solomon has requested up to date materials on HIV/AIDS, especially a variety of views and approaches to addressing related problems. He is also very interested in accessing information and re-

