

A PROJECT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN
GODE, ETHIOPIA

TAMARA PROJECT



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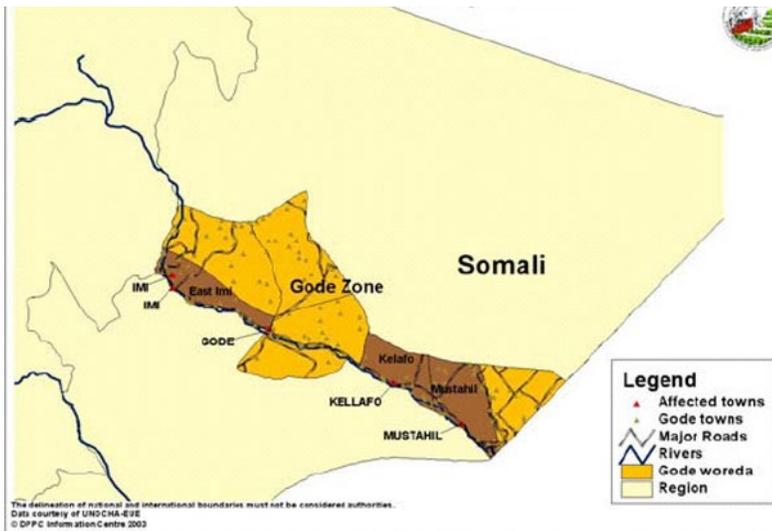
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The following is an outline for a project for vulnerable women and their children as found in the streets and brothels of Gode, Ethiopia.

Geographical context

Gode is located in the Ethiopian Somali Region, in the South East of Ethiopia, in the border with Somalia. The Somali Region is the most eastern and second largest of the nine Ethiopian regions. About 86% of the population lives in rural areas, and are mainly nomadic cattle farmers and, to a lesser extent, agricultural farmers as well. Life and survival revolves around livestock, with people constantly moving about in the interests of their livestock.

The region is arid and semiarid, raining only two months at year and with temperatures reaching 38° most of the year. The lack of rain is the biggest threat to the cereal crops. This badly affects the animals, reducing the number of head by between 60/90 per cent in the seasons of drought. Lack of economic resources allows neither the authorities nor the communities to use the resource of the Webi Shabeelle River that crosses Gode.



Gode is home to thousands of these former cattle farmers who live in informal settlements on the outskirts of town, having migrated to Gode after losing all their livestock during the drought of 1999/2000. On the other hand, the town is also the place where thousands of young men from other parts of Ethiopia move for military service. As a consequence of their presence in the town, many young women work as prostitutes, contracting diseases and exposing their children to life in the bars and brothels.

As a consequence of low agricultural productivity, the population does not enjoy a healthy diet. Children have very high malnutrition rates and infant mortality is also high. In Gode, 1 in 5 children do not live to be adults. Millions of people have no access to basic services.

The Literacy rate is only 18.2 per cent of the population. In fact, only 1 in 10 children receive Primary Education. Most of the children work as shepherds and the access of women to education is very low. The literacy rate of women is 9.8 per cent while that of men is 29.5%. As there is a lack of educational infrastructure, many children throughout the rural Somali Region are sent to Koranic schools as national schools simply do not exist.

As well as high levels of poverty, the population is also affected by the insecurity of the region, due to the conflict with Somalia. The violent conflict between two armed rebel groups and the Ethiopian army has lasted a very long time. As a consequence, thousands of people from Somalia flee the conflict and the droughts, and come to Gode and the surrounding areas.

Background of the Mission

The Catholic Church has been present in Gode since the arrival of the parish priest, Fr Christopher Hartley, in 2007. It is a town with a heavy military presence, harsh terrain and a population which is predominantly Moslem.

In 2009, Fr Hartley began construction on land that had been given to the Church by the local government; in 2013, he began with the construction of a *Nutritional and Educational Center* on this land, in order to serve the local community.

Rationale for the project

The presence of the Church in such an area is in response to the command of Jesus, to proclaim both His Presence and Message “to the ends of the earth”, a command which has been repeatedly stressed by our present Holy Father’s constant appeal for “**First Evangelization**”.

Anyone walking the streets of Gode with eyes and ears open, becomes aware immediately of the relentless need for a mission, to reveal to every man, woman and child, the merciful love of a God they do not know.

The Church made its presence known in the local community during the construction on site, by visiting people in the town. Because we are often called to visit someone who is sick, we make contact with those who have nothing and no one to take care of their basic needs. Apart from playing with the children and speaking to their mothers, we have used these conversations to discover vulnerable members of the community. Thereafter, we began taking sick children and women to the local medical facilities (the regional hospital and the SOS medical clinic).



In the course of such home visits we discovered that many of the people we made contact with were sick with HIV/AIDS, and so we brought them to the regional hospital for assistance. It was then that the Hospital asked for our cooperation to make contact with HIV patients who had dropped out of their ART programme. In view of this cooperation, the Church has entered into a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ with the Hospital. This has the full support of the Apostolic Vicar, Bishop Woldetensae.

On a short visit to Gode, the Director of HCS, Ato Bekele Moges, visited the regional hospital and met the medical professionals with whom the missionaries have almost daily contact.

Many of the women we have contacted work in the local brothel (euphemistically called a “Coffee House”). They serve as waitresses, cleaners, etc. and also as prostitutes. These young women are often under 25, with young children, and no other means of support but what they gain in the brothel.

Whilst most of these women are “independent” prostitutes, once in the brothel they come under the “authority” of the House “Mother”. They are fed and housed (although many still have to pay some part of their rent). They are prostitutes not by choice but by necessity, they lose their sense of self worth and self respect. Often they see no alternative to this life. They have a vague idea of the danger they face with regard to contracting HIV, and other diseases, but see it as a necessary risk when facing the financial difficulties they in.

These women come from many different geographic, and therefore, cultural areas of Ethiopia. We are in contact with women from Tigray, the Amhara, and Oromo regions as well as those who are from the local Somali community. The “magnet” for most of them has been the arrival of the security forces now heavily present in the town of Gode. Each woman has her own unique nightmarish story.

Objectives - A Way Forward

Our contact with these women and their children has enabled us to enter their world and bring a message of Hope. As practical measures we have tried to offer,

Specifics:

1. Friendship

We try to dispel the loneliness that comes from poverty and the marginalization that HIV can bring. We spend time with them, comforting them in their difficulties.

2. The possibility of learning a skill which could help them to earn a living.

We have started a handicraft workshop hoping that they can acquire the skill they need to sell the products of their labor (rather than themselves).

We have started informal classes of handicraft where the women learn to make purses which can then be sold. This is not only a means of income but also a means to increase their self esteem. They see the artistic and colorful articles they are able to produce. We would like to move these informal classes into the school building we are now completing. This would provide an environment conducive to learning in a serious way, as well as a breathing space and a distance from their normal habitat.

3. The possibility to take care of their medical issues as well as that of their children.

We accompany any woman together with her child (if the child is sick) to the hospital or clinic, we remind them of their appointments for ART and help them sort out the myriad requirements for various blood or other tests they might need (often these tests are not free and these women have little or no spare cash, and so we often have to pay).



4. Addressing the every day educational needs of the children

- i. Because these women move so often, the education of their children is haphazard and very poor. To deal with this we have managed to get some of the older children accepted in a local school (we have paid for the uniform and books and tuition fees). The other younger children we plan to accommodate in our school building in a kindergarten.



- ii. All around the school are villages which are far from the town and thus small children are unable to attend school. So we would like to make our KG available to some of the children who are in fact our neighbours. This would mean that we would plan for two KG classes (comprising approx 25 – 30 children each) to “accompany” the handicraft classes of the women.

Beneficiaries

- As mentioned above we hope to serve between **50 – 60** Kindergarten children (roughly equal numbers of boys and girls) drawn from the children of the women who attend the handicraft classes, as well as from the neighbouring community.
- 30 vulnerable women split into groups of 10 for the first year.

Result

As a result of the above, we hope:

- To start early in the combat of poverty through education, giving children a good start in life from the stand point of education, nutrition, and safety, (keeping them from a life on the street, or in and around the brothels)
- Give the women
 - ★ A means by which to escape a life of degradation by learning a new life sustaining skill.
 - ★ Help with their nutrition and general health through systematic care and help with keeping medical appointments etc.
 - ★ Help to create a sense of order and direction in their lives.

Budget

	<u>Monthly</u>	<u>Yearly</u>
<u>Teachers</u>		
2 Kindergarten	220.00	2 860.00
3 Assistants	180.00	2 340.00
1 Handcraft	60.00	780.00
1 Nursery	60.00	780.00
1 Cook + 1 Assistant	120.00	1 560.00
2 Cleaners	120.00	1 560.00
<u>Formation Courses</u>		
2 Courses for the Tamara project	-	550.00
2 Montessori courses	-	600.00
<u>Bills</u>		
Water	-	9 000.00
Drinking water	-	1 600.00
Fuel for the generator (Electricity)	500.00	6 000.00
Petrol (2 cars)	-	5 000.00
<u>Materials</u>		
Per handcraft student (10 USD/month x 30)	300.00	3 600.00
Library/Teaching materials	-	600.00
<u>Breakfast</u>		
Bread for 80 people	192.00	2 304.00
A glass of milk for 80 people	400.00	4 800.00
<u>Lunch</u>		
Rice/Pasta/Eggs/Tomatoes	775.00	9.300.00
<u>Extraordinary Expenses</u>		
Charity donations	50.00	600.00
Reparations	-	500.00
TOTAL	USD	54.334.00
	EUR	48.000.00

Strategies

- ❖ Kindergarten Classes in the School
- ❖ Liaison with the hospital over medical issues
- ❖ Handicraft Classes
- ❖ Nursery Classes for mothers.
- ❖ Regular meals twice a day (breakfast and lunch)

Management

Coordination will be carried out by a voluntary staff of three, (a nun and two young women).

Monitoring and Evaluation

This will be carried out internally with six monthly reports being written for the benefit of our donors and to make any changes needed to attain our goals.

Sustainability

In this first year of the project we hope to be able to establish small cooperatives of women who, apart from learning a handcraft, will

1. Learn the basics of goat rearing – thus providing a revenue for the continuation of this project
2. Learn the basics of rudimentary kitchen gardening to be able to feed the children attending the KG.
3. Learn basic marketing skills both for the sale of the handicraft items and how to manage their own money.

In the future, we hope this project will serve to enable the women to diversify their skills and prepare them individually and collectively for a different and more fulfilling way of life. But for the time being, until the women become financially independent, we are arranging for a programme of “person to person” sponsorship to cover their living costs.

Contact

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Account details

UK

Account name: The Mission of Hope

National Donations

Sort code: 30-97-25

Account No. 33775368

International Donations

Swift Code: LOYDGB21185

IBAN: GBO9 LOYD 3097 2533 7753 68

Ethiopia

Account name: Laura Mary E Brown

Account number: 1000133562398

Bank name: Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa Branch

SWIFT Code: CBETETA