



PAAV Perspectives

December 2024

From Dr. Frew Tegene

Once again it is the time of the year to share with you the good things we have been doing in Sendafa through Project Adopt A Village (PAAV). It is a huge privilege and an honor partnering and working with you. I greatly appreciate and am thankful for your kindness, and the love and compassion you have shown to the poor people of Sendafa. In these times of divisiveness, hatred and selfishness it is rare to find people who care about others. Some of you haven't been to Sendafa and seen the hardships that the poor people we help have to endure day by day. But even though you don't know these people personally, you care for them and share what you have with them as if they were your own family members or your next-door neighbors. There are lots of people in Sendafa who are able to help but have never shared a dime with their poor neighbors. I again thank you for your contributions and generous gifts.

I remember the time I went visiting the home of a sick HIV patient with an American surgeon who came to work at our medical campaign. This surgeon sat beside the sick bed ridden patient holding her hands and listening to her story for about an hour. He was almost crying and held to her hands comforting her and telling her to stay strong. That lady is still alive after more than a decade and works tirelessly day and night to support her family. Most people wouldn't even dare enter the homes of HIV patients let alone hold their hands and listen to their stories for hours. Such kindness has raised the hopes of many people who had lost hope.

During this year we were able to examine and treat 4,868 patients during our week long medical campaign in July. People with eye problems, patients who needed surgical intervention, those with dental problems, mothers, children, those with dermatological diseases and those with various ailments were examined and treated during the campaign. These days getting surgical, eye and dental treatment is very expensive. It can cost a person more than 20,000 birr (\$190 USD) to get a simple surgery or dental treatment. Complicated cases can cost a person more than 500,000 birr (\$4700 USD). Most people, even those who have jobs and monthly salaries can't afford to get treatment. Therefore most live with their diseases. During our medical campaigns we have seen people who have lost their sights, who have lost a limb, who have developed severe cardiac complications and many others because of lack of money to get the proper treatment. Some patients have never seen a physician their whole lives. Thus our free medical campaign has benefited a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't have been treated due to financial constraints. In addition to the once yearly medical campaign, the PAAV team sees and treats patients every week at the Sendafa Beke health center.



Another aspect of our medical work is carrying out health education to various community groups in Sendafa. We provide health education on such topics like HIV/ AIDS, Covid, Typhoid fever and typhus, diarrheal diseases, hypertension, diabetes, trachoma, dental carries, benefits of hand washing and immunization. Health education is provided in schools, in the Sendafa Beke health center, in the Sendafa open market place, in liquor stores and by going home to home. During the year we were able to address 2,890 people through health education.



Regarding our nutritional support program we provide food items like wheat, cooking oil and grains to poor people who have HIV every month. Each month 55 poor people with HIV benefit from this food support. These people not only have HIV but they are unable to work because of physical disabilities, because of frequent opportunistic infections or because of old age. Some of these people wouldn't even survive a month without the support we provide. Additionally we also offer nutritional support to 120 people living in poverty who are disabled, are retired and too old. Most have no families and live alone. In Sendafa there are no facilities like nursing homes that care for the elderly. The elderly often live alone and die alone. Some are discovered dead in their beds days after death.



Nutritional support is also given to infants aged 6 months up to 2 years. Nutrients containing minerals, vitamins and iron has been given to more than 600 children this year.

When we come to our educational support program 142 children received educational support during the year. We buy school materials to these children at the beginning of the year. Monthly school fees are paid to a few of these students. Out of the 142 students who receive educational support 22 are children of commercial sex workers. Providing educational support is one means of helping these kids come out of illiteracy and poverty. Additionally most children of commercial sex workers usually end up being sex workers when they get older. Supporting these children get education is a big step in preventing these children from becoming sex workers.



PAAV has recently been doing much work in helping female commercial sex workers come out of prostitution. This is extremely hard and tedious work that requires much patience. Most of these women are young, in their teens or twenties. Almost all have been forced into prostitution because of extreme poverty, or because of abusive spouses or family members. They experience much abuse, beatings, rape, physical injury and even end up not being paid after sleeping with a client. When we talk to these women privately asking them to share their experiences, they usually start crying after a few minutes. Almost all have had no education above grade 3 or 4. They have to sleep with more than 4 or 5 men just to pay daily house rent (this doesn't include buying food or caring for children). They have no work experience and have no joy in their lives. PAAV has been trying to provide jobs to

these women. Finding working space in Sendafa isn't easy. During the year PAAV was able to help 5 of these ladies start their own small businesses. Small businesses like starting coffee shops, baking pastries and selling spices were started by these women. In addition to helping these women start their own businesses PAAV provides health education regarding HIV, STDs and other communicable diseases. Also food materials like wheat, cooking oil and grains were given to these women. PAAV also helps people with HIV start their own businesses. Small retail shops, fattening and selling cattle and sheep, small coffee shops and selling grains were some of the businesses that PAAV helped HIV patients start.



My dear friends, let me end my letter by encouraging you to:

"DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN, IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN, TO ALL THE SOULS YOU CAN, IN EVERY PLACE YOU CAN, WITH ALL THE ZEAL YOU CAN, AS LONG AS EVER YOU CAN."

John Wesley

Thank you and God bless you all.

Dr. Frew