

Report on Consultancy to EREP at Rishi Valley, India, August 2006

DATE: 20 April 2007

TO: Susquehanna Valley Presbytery Subcommittee on Ethiopian Partnership (SVP)

FROM: Mary Rhodes

FUNDS: \$4,000 from SVP. Any cost beyond that to be borne by participants. Total cost exceeded \$4,600; see attached records.

PARTICIPANTS: Mary Rhodes
Diana Thompson

DURATION: July 30, 2006 - August 16, 2006 of which August 1 - 10 were spent at Rishi Valley

PURPOSES:

1. To meet with partners from Ethiopia and India to review project progress and to project future course.
2. To review curriculum development process and to consider options for continued development.
3. To observe operation of rural schools in India.
4. To assess adoption of the school garden model found in the US to the needs of the EREP schools in Ethiopia (See separate report filed by Diana Thompson)

ETHIOPIAN

PARTICIPANTS: Teferi Dina
Amanuel Tesfaye
Dugasa Beyene
Mitiku Tuchoo

INDIAN

PARTICIPANTS: Rama Rao
Padmanabha Rao

BUDGET: See attached Ethiopian Rural Education Project Budget 2006-2008

1. We met daily with the Raos and Teferi Dina to discuss project direction including such topics as number of children per classroom, whether schools should provide meals to children, teacher qualifications, relationship to the UN Millennium Development Goals, how to maintain strong electronic communication between Dembi Dollo and Rishi Valley, future curriculum development, and a timeline for opening the schools in Ethiopia. It was decided that teachers will be recruited from the teacher training institute in Dembi Dollo. Graduates of this institute are certified teachers, which is a critical factor for maintaining government standards in the schools. The teachers will be recruited and trained in September 2006 and the schools will open in October. In October or November 2007 the Padmanabha, Rama, and two staff members from Rishi Valley will spend two weeks in Ethiopia assessing developments to date and providing additional training for the teachers. The demand for schools is so great, we anticipate that the schools will be more crowded than the Indian schools. We will have two teachers per school classroom. We do not plan to provide meals for the children at our schools in part because of the larger numbers of children involved. The Raos are working with

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the Government of India to develop tele-education. They anticipate that this will greatly facilitate their communication with our Ethiopian partners. On the US side, we need to provide funding for the school furnishings, for printing and laminating Grade 1 and Grade 2 curriculum cards, for funding the teachers' salaries, for curriculum development of Grade 3 and Grade 4, and for development of the gardens/plant nurseries. In discussions I had with Teferi, we plan to develop Grade 3 and Grade 4 curriculum at our resource center in Dembi Dollo. This will save the great expense of travel to India and spending one month there per year. Telecommuting with Rishi Valley will enable our Indian colleagues to continue to provide artists and curriculum card layout. We will look for possibilities in Addis for printing and laminating the final cards. This is a very encouraging direction for our Ethiopian partners to take.

2. We met with the curriculum working group as they completed final revisions of Grade 1 materials that were developed at the first curriculum development workshop in 2004. The working group consisted of all of the Ethiopian participants, Rama Rao, Padmanabha Rao, and Anil, another staff person at Rishi Valley. The purpose of that meeting was to review the 15 integrating stories for the environmental curriculum. The Ethiopian team discussed the appropriateness of the stories they had selected from the standard Oromo curriculum book. They discussed the vocabulary that the stories introduce, and evaluated how the text of the lessons contributed to learning outcomes. After making the final revisions to the Grade 1 curriculum, the curriculum cards were ready for printing and lamination. The group discussed whether to print and laminate them in India or in Addis Ababa and decided that this time they would print and laminate in India. For future curriculum development (Grades 3 and 4) they probably will print and laminate in Addis. The decision was to print 20 sets at a cost of approximately \$5,000. The 20 sets of cards were prepared and the Ethiopian team carried most of them on their return flight to Dembi Dollo. The remainder will be carried to Dembi by the Indian team when they go to Ethiopia in 2007. The working group turned next to development of the Grade 2 curriculum cards. They completed that work by the time they left India at the end of August. The Indian team will complete the artistic work on the cards and will print and laminate them.

The working group has developed an effective work relationship over the course of the two curriculum development workshops (2004 and 2006). This relationship has been sustained and enhanced through electronic communication. The strength of this relationship will enhance future curriculum development which, for the most part will be done in Ethiopia with the long distance support of the Indian team.

3. We visited several rural schools and observed how they operate and some of the variances among them. For example, many schools have no furniture for the children; the children sit on mats on the floor in their different groups. In others, children sit on mats on the floor and work on low tables. Yet in another school, the children have chairs and tables. The plan for the EREP schools is to have chairs and tables. One of the next steps for the EREP schools is acquisition of the school furniture. The team will do that when they return to Ethiopia and after we forward the money to them.

The schools are multi-grade, multi-level and operate with one teacher and sometimes an assistant. Generally there are approximately 30 children attending. The single school classroom invariably is a lively environment for learning filled with stimulating educational materials. One wall contains the boxes of curriculum cards. Another wall is a blackboard at

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the level where even the smallest child can reach it. Small mobiles and other child-made art dangles from the ceiling on strings. Children work in groups and the teacher moves from group to group to guide and assess the learning process. Children move through the curriculum at their own pace, which is one of the strengths of this educational methodology. They change to a different group when they have mastered the materials and are ready for the next level of curriculum card. Our Ethiopian team members frequently interacted with the children.

The Raos told us that children who complete the curriculum in these rural schools achieve higher scores on the standardized government examination than do the children from government funded schools.

4. The school gardens/plant nurseries will integrate the school project into environmental change. As with the schools in India, the children and the community will participate in land reforestation with seedlings nurtured in our plant nurseries. In two villages we have a school building. Each building has two schools. For each of the school buildings we will have one nursery. Both schools in a village will be associated with the one nursery for that village's school building. Nursery costs include seeds, potting tubes, transport of soil, well digging, irrigation hose, tools, insecticide. Estimated cost is \$2,200 for each nursery; total of \$4,400. The school garden will be a defined area near the school building that will contain fruit trees and vegetable gardens. Please refer also to the report submitted by Diana Thompson.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultancy with our Ethiopian and Indian partners. I very much appreciate the financial support from Susquehanna Valley Presbytery and the continued encouragement received for this project. This is a complex project and I am pleased that we have made so much progress. I look forward to its future development.