

Report

To: Susquehanna Valley Presbytery
From: Diana E. Thompson
Subject: Rishi Valley visit August 2006
Date: September 8, 2006

I am honored that the Susquehanna Valley Presbytery was kind enough to partially sponsor my trip to the Rishi Valley of India.

The thrust of this trip for me was the exploration and assessment of the gardening aspect of the Ethiopian Rural Education Project in DembiDollo, Ethiopia.

I am pleased to announce that this aspect of the project is progressing admirably and is in very capable Ethiopian hands.

In my discussions with Mr. Teferi Dina, of Ethiopia and Mr. and Mrs. Rao, of Rishi Valley, I perceived that great thought and care had been put into the garden aspect of the project.

While we might term what is being done as a school garden, the scope of the Ethiopian vision is much larger. Not only are they talking about a proverbial school garden, but also an integrated garden/nursery that would not only be an integral component of the education process in the local community, but a source of future project funding.

The Ethiopians are cognitive of the importance of this project and its funding in its present and future tense. Not content to feed a few, they have the vision that, if done properly, the few will lead to the many.

The plan is to start with two small gardens. The initial startup will be \$2,200 for each garden. These costs reflect the purchase of fruit and vegetable seeds and seedlings, pollinator tubes, fertilizer, hoses, some tools and the very important digging of the well for water.

While it might seem like a good idea to buy and send the seeds and equipment from the U.S., in essence it would not. We can not duplicate, in the U.S. the time tested seeds/seedlings that are climatically correct for the DembiDollo region. These items might and should be purchased locally in Addis Ababa. By doing this, not only would they have crops that are bound to be successful, but they also would avoid having to pay import taxes on our donations. Likewise, the other components of this project are available in Ethiopia and the local procurement of them makes sense both to their long range goals and our budgeting model.

As we know from other reports on the EREP project, they plan on starting classes in late September or early October, depending on funding. Taking advantage of their rainy/dry

climate sequence, they are hopeful to have ground tilled by early November and seeds planted early in 2007.

In my time at Rishi Valley, Mr. Dina, Dr. Rhodes and I have had not only numerous and productive meetings, but we have all visited school gardens, vegetable gardens and the Rishi Valley's magnificent reforestation project.

The lushness of the Rishi Valley environment is something that I believe, with SVP and other support, might indeed be duplicable in DembiDollo.

Mr. Dina and the three other members of the EREP project have stunned me with their breath of knowledge, their honest assessment of what the project means to their home community and the total commitment they have to this project.

These men are not only dedicated to the basic tenants of helping their immediate neighbors, but also helping the Western Wollege area become a model that others will sagely follow.

The caring, money and trust that Susquehanna Valley Presbytery has put into the EREP project will be returned to you one thousand fold in children who are literate and free from hunger and proud bearers of their counties heritage.

They may never know your names, but your help will change generations.