

A black and white photograph of two hands shaking in a firm grip. The hand on the left is lighter-skinned, and the hand on the right is darker-skinned. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees and sunlight. The text "Allies in Development" is overlaid on the image in a white, italicized serif font.

*Allies in Development*

**Visions Global Empowerment  
2014 Annual Report**

*Working hand-in-hand with local communities to improve education and promote development and overall wellbeing.*

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Sabine Wyss, *Core Volunteer*

February 15, 2015

Dear Friends,

Worldwide, millions of children face immense daily hardships that prevent them from accessing a quality education or preparing themselves for a meaningful, educated, and independent life. Since 2003, we have labored tirelessly toward creating educational and personal development opportunities that serve community needs and enable youth to improve their own lives and overall wellbeing.

This year proved to be a turning point for Visions, and we are so grateful to all of you who continue to make our work possible. On behalf of our entire Visions team and network of local partner organizations abroad, thank you for your support of our ongoing education initiatives on behalf of youth affected by conflict, poverty, and disability in Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, and India.

As always, we are honored to share some of our many achievements from 2014 with you in this Annual Report, and invite you to continue to engage with us and make a contribution toward our ongoing efforts. Some of the major highlights from this year include the following:

- ❖ Formed new partnerships with **Nazareth College** and **SUNY New Paltz** to run officially sanctioned/accredited service learning trips to Ethiopia in 2014/2015
- ❖ Grew our **Visions Leadership Academy** in India & Sri Lanka to **104** student leaders
- ❖ Established a BIT (**Bachelors of Information Technology**) computer lab at the Jaffna College Institute of Technology in Jaffna, Northern Sri Lanka
- ❖ Developed a **Deaf Resource Room** and laid the foundation for establishing a Model Regional Deafness Center in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia in 2015 with a \$100,000 grant from the Dream Blue Foundation
- ❖ Successfully ran our **summer volunteer service trips** for a 12<sup>th</sup> year in a row (this year in Ethiopia and India)
- ❖ Launched a campaign and completed filming for a Visions documentary – **“Voices of Empowerment”** – due to be released in Spring 2015

Please join us in bringing hope and opportunity to marginalized communities by getting involved and/or making a tax-deductible contribution today. Together we can move mountains...

With gratitude,



Gregory Buie  
Executive Director/Co-Founder



Meera Pathmarajah  
CEO/Founder



# Our Impact

Since 2003, Visions has served communities in need through education development efforts designed to enable students, teachers, schools, and local civil society organizations to become self-sufficient and capable of participating as leaders in today's society. We offer the following insights into our ongoing efforts...



**18,630**

lives impacted



**2,696**

leadership students & teachers trained



**122**

scholarships awarded



**1,181**

students attended after-school programs



**44**

leadership & teacher trainings conducted



**132**

international volunteers traveled abroad



**\$729,363**

invested in education programs

## What We Accomplished in 2014...

### USA & CANADA

- More than 2 Dozen Chapters Established to-date in North America (and one each in Australia, New Zealand, and Qatar)
- New Partnerships Forged with Nazareth College & SUNY New Paltz

### INDIA

- Leadership Academy serving 50 youth
- Teacher Salaries & New Playground/Sports Field at SAWED Radiance School
- Scholarships & Livelihoods Support for 7 Young Adults
- 1 Group Service Trip (8 total International Volunteers)
- Filming for 3 Short Documentary Films (2 International Volunteers)
- After-School Programs for 111 Youth

### ETHIOPIA

- Established Deaf Resource Room
- Salaries for 2 Deaf Teachers
- Scholarships & Livelihoods Support for 12 Deaf Young Adults
- 2 Group Service Trips (22 total International Volunteers)

### SRI LANKA

- 9 After-School Centers Serving 609 Youth
- Leadership Academy Serving 55 Youth
- 2 Scholarships for Young Adults
- Computer Lab at Jaffna Tech
- Teacher Training for 63 Teachers



# 2014 Service Trips – Ethiopia & India

For the 12th year running, Visions conducted its annual summer volunteer trips – this time to Ethiopia (9 volunteers) and India (8 volunteers). What a motivating and inspiring experience it is to spend time on the ground working side by side with our local partners and the youth they serve! Some of the highlights included the following:

## ETHIOPIA

- Meeting with members of the **Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA)** and **Ethiopian Human Rights Commission** in Addis Ababa, including Ethiopia's former Ambassador to the UN Tiruneh Zena
- Conducting a **3-day capacity building training** with 17 local colleagues from Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar designed to help empower and foster a thriving deaf civil society in Ethiopia
- Leading a 3-day program for 73 youth (ages 6 - 29) at the 3rd annual **"Ethiopia Deaf Education & Empowerment" youth camp** in Bahir Dar



## INDIA

- Conducting a special 2-day leadership training on **"Environmental Consciousness & Community Impact"** for 37 Visions India Leadership Academy students
- **Planting 25 trees** in designated "oxygen zones" in 2 villages with leadership students
- Leading a 3-day **"Introduction to Leadership"** training for 51 Dalit youth
- Conducting a 2-day program for 139 young children and separate teacher training at the **SAWED Radiance School for Tribal & Dalit Children** in Dindigul

Beyond our annual summer service trips, Visions also ran a 2-week university-sanctioned trip in partnership with **Nazareth College** in Rochester, New York this December 2014/January 2015 for 14 student, faculty, and community volunteers. This marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> university that Visions has teamed up with in running a service-learning program. Aside from working directly with the deaf youth and young adults, visiting Visions' ongoing projects, and learning about Deafness and Ethiopian Sign Language, the group was also able to visit the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela during Ethiopian Christmas.



Looking at 2015, Visions will be running an accredited trip from June 15<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> with the **State University of New York – New Paltz (SUNY New Paltz)** – our 4<sup>th</sup> such university partnership. We are very excited about it!



**Rebecca Swenson**  
2014 International  
Volunteer – Ethiopia  
Accord, New York

*"Participation in the Visions Deaf Education and Empowerment program in Ethiopia this past summer has reinvigorated my love for traveling in Africa and provided me with an amazing experience that has reinforced my career goal of spreading Deaf Awareness to others."*

*Participating in the Deaf Leadership Capacity Training was informative, thought-provoking and productive. It really got all the participants thinking about goals for developing a "Thriving Deaf Civil Society in Ethiopia". It was fantastic to see the Visions model for encouraging and empowering local partners to take ownership of their work and become leaders. It was a fantastic trip!"*

### All 2014 Visions International Volunteers

Haley Annal	Kaytie Nielsen
Marie Avilez	Kelly Pablo
Paula Brown	Anisha Rajavel
Greg Buie*	Sahana Rajkumar
Catherine Clark	Julie Shahin*
Elizabeth Finigan	Lindsay Sherling
Joan Forman	Venita Sivamani
Lee Fox	Branavy Somasundaram
Mimi Giboin**	Morgan Sommers
Mary Grace Hamme	Amanda Sudore
Lexi Hernandez	Rebecca Swenson
Joe Hill	Monique Tibbs
Nik Lub*	Annie Varatharajah
Lisa Martinez	Suzanne Whelpley
Mireilys Martinez	Sabine Wyss
Achchana Nadarajah	

*\*denotes participation in multiple volunteer trips*

# A Spirit of Service: Visions Chapters in Action

## Davis, CA



Our Visions Davis Chapter continues to shine, having held multiple events in 2014, including Dheem Tana—the first intercollegiate Bharata Natyam dance showcase on the West Coast. In total, this highly active group of young women raised more than \$10,000!

## New York, NY

Another pillar of strength, our Visions NYC Chapter held several social gatherings in 2014, including a Spring celebration “Party for a Cause” which raised more than \$8,000 for our Visions Leadership Academy in Sri Lanka.



## Edmonton, AB



Battling through cold weather and snow, our deeply committed Edmonton team stepped up again in raising funds for our Leadership Academy in Sri Lanka through a holiday recycling drive. The team also held a BBQ in the park and a spring tea at a private residence. Such an inspiring group!

## Pittsburgh, PA

Two undergrads from Carnegie Mellon University and one from the University of Pittsburgh have started 2 chapters at their respective institutions. Often working collaboratively, they held bake sales, sold holiday ornaments, organized a fundraiser at Chipotle, and helped facilitate a \$5,000 grant from Wells Fargo.



**Navaranjana, age 15**  
Sri Lanka Leadership Academy  
Unnichcha, Eastern Sri Lanka

*“I have been participating in this leadership program for one year... I am so happy because I get to travel to a new place and meet many new friends. Until now there were no extra classes in my village. I am now able to*

*observe my progress after participating in these classes. I have improved due to our teachers. Not only do I participate in tutoring classes but also I participate in leadership programs...*

*I would like to share my experience from the first day of the leadership program. From childhood I have been very shy, fearful, and nervous, and I did not have self-confidence. I was even scared to introduce myself. Then Biyoora sister and other volunteers taught me step by step. Then only I gained a little confidence in my life. After participating in this leadership program I have developed so many skills. For example: how to speak in front of others, how to communicate, how to face challenges, how to solve problems, how to make good decisions, etc. I gained general knowledge and learned about current issues. Now I feel fulfilled with skills and knowledge and received good marks in my school subjects.”*

## Rochester, NY

One of our newest chapters, the Rochester Visions team made quite an impact in 2014, foremost of which was negotiating a new partnership and group service trip to Ethiopia with Nazareth College – the 3<sup>rd</sup> such university Visions has partnered with to-date. In addition, the team held a fall house concert with a local folk band and worked diligently (along with our Saugerties Chapter) in spreading the word about Visions’ work in Ethiopia in particular. It should also be noted that 14 service trip volunteers came from NY this year, and our Rochester Chapter Director Mary Grace Hamme received a scholarship from the AllPeopleBeHappy Foundation to spend a month volunteering in Ethiopia.



# VISIONS IN SRI LANKA

## Shaping Young Leaders & Rebuilding Communities



### Sri Lanka Leadership Academy



Our Visions Sri Lanka Leadership Academy has flourished over the past year, in large part due to hiring our first full-time staff, Ms. Biyoora Kanesh. Although Biyoora started working on Visions' projects in Sri Lanka in 2013, she transitioned to a full-time position in January 2014 and was tasked with overseeing our After-School Programs, Visions Leadership Academy, and other efforts. Since then, we have seen her make incredible progress. Biyoora represents the type of strong youth leadership that Visions strives so ardently to foster and is now a role model to many.

With 55 students enrolled throughout 2014, the program was structured so that participants (broken into two groups of Grade 10 and Grade 11 students) benefit from regular academic tutoring in basic subjects (including math, science, Tamil, English, and social science) and bi-monthly residential leadership development trainings that cover a wide variety of topics. Games and activities are a regular staple of the program too, allowing for students to have fun and forge friendships with other students.

### After-School Programs

With Visions' educational programs in Sri Lanka having grown considerably over the past few years, our impact has increased as well. Striving to fill the gaps after many years of conflict and overall hardship, Visions has invested heavily in the development of educational infrastructure and opportunities for marginalized communities. More than **609 youth** long-affected by the conflict and displacement attended an after-school program at one of 9 centers Visions runs in partnership with the Church of the American Ceylon Mission in Karadiyanaru and Vaharai in the Eastern Province, and Suthanthirapuram in the Northern Province. These after-school centers provide vital instruction in major subjects (such as Tamil, maths, science, etc.) and oftentimes mentoring support as well.

### English Teacher Training

In December, Visions sent a resource person from India to conduct 10 days of English teacher training for 63 schoolteachers, pre-school teachers, and VTC staff in Eastern Sri Lanka. Focusing on the practical development of English listening and speaking



**Sajai, age 11**  
After-School Program Student  
Kithul, Eastern Sri Lanka

*"I am a lucky boy, because I have the opportunity to participate in this after-school program. I would like all of our village students to participate in this program just as I have."*

abilities, the training was well received. Efforts are already underway to make this a regular program with quarterly follow-up trainings for teacher participants.

### Satheeshkumar

After-School Program –  
Math Teacher  
Batticaloa, Sri Lanka



*"I am teaching Mathematics for Grade 10 and Grade 11 students who are from marginalized villages. This program is greatly needed. This project pushes all the students to study well and gives them an interest in learning. This is my observation through examination and feedback. We are able to improve their school marks also. Therefore, this program must continue. If we do that, they will shine brightly—of that there is no doubt."*

### Jaffna Tech Computer Lab

Thanks to the generous support of the Paul Family in Charlotte, NC, students working towards a Bachelors of Information

Technology (B.I.T.) degree at the Jaffna College Institute of Technology are now benefiting from new computer lab facilities. With these new facilities, the



college was able to increase the number of students enrolled in the program and improve the overall learning experience.





# VISIONS IN ETHIOPIA

## Building Deaf Civil Society & Empowering Deaf Youth

Over the past several years, Visions volunteers have been researching, networking, conducting site visits, and piloting initiatives in Ethiopia in an effort to help educate and empower the Deaf community—a population for which there are virtually no public services and formal opportunities for education, employment, or social inclusion and mobility.

### Our Efforts

Visions has hired Deaf teachers, helped facilitate the establishment of a **Deaf Resource Room** at Yekatit 23 School in Bahir Dar (complete with computer lab), provided **scholarships and mentoring** support for 12 Deaf young adults to pursue educational and vocational endeavors, and kick started the efforts of a whole team of US- and Ethiopia-based volunteers to develop a **training manual** and program for teachers of Deaf students and school administrators.



### Service Trips

For the third year running, a 2-week summer **service learning trip** was held in Ethiopia, in which 9 American volunteers joined hands with 17 local volunteers in conducting educational training programs that benefitted 73 Deaf youth and young adults. **Two US-based universities** have also recently formed partnerships with Visions to run officially sanctioned and accredited service learning trips to Ethiopia—one with **Nazareth College** (Rochester, NY), which ran this December 2014/January 2015, and one with **State University of New York at New Paltz** (SUNY New Paltz), scheduled to run in June 2015. Including the upcoming SUNY New Paltz trip, 47 Americans will have volunteered their time abroad with us in Ethiopia.

### Impact

The impact of Visions' efforts in Ethiopia has been dramatic. Within just 2 years, the number of Deaf students and young adults who attended formal schooling or received academic support at Yekatit 23 School in Bahir Dar grew by 128%, from 32 individuals in 2012 to 73 individuals in 2014. Additionally, the number of schools in the district (in which there are 32 total) that had “special classrooms” designated for Deaf children grew from just one (Yekatit 23 School) to three (including Tenna School & Donna Berber School; opened in 2014). One itinerant teacher of Deaf children was hired to serve all Deaf students throughout the district. And in the summer of 2014, Yekatit 23 School was named **the top performing school** amongst 32 schools in the Bahir Dar District and was honored for its achievement at a special ceremony!



### Establishing a Model Regional Deafness Center

This fall Visions was notified that it had been selected for a **\$100,000 grant** from the **Dream Blue Foundation** in Texas toward the establishment of a Model Regional Deafness Center in Bahir Dar in 2015. The ethos behind this center is to create a “one-stop shop” where all Deaf persons and their families will be able to access a comprehensive set of services that address all major areas of need—including education, access to information, medical care, language training, counseling/ mentoring, livelihoods support, and connection to other Deaf communities & the global community. Visions now stands at the forefront of this pioneering work in Ethiopia and hopes this center will serve as a model for the country and for the East Africa region as a whole.

#### Mulugeta Moges

Scholarship Recipient  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



*“Before, I had given up on learning. Then Visions came along. I am fortunate because I have always had an interest in learning and studying. They gave me many different opportunities; they gave me support. These opportunities have been very positive for me and for others. The deaf students can now learn well because there are deaf sign language teachers in the classroom. So our lives are changing. We now have hope—great hope for a brighter future for ourselves.”*

# VISIONS IN INDIA

Inspiring Individual Achievement & Community Development



**Daisy Diana, age 16**  
India Leadership Academy  
Thirukovilur, India

*"I consider myself as equal to boys, and I have all the talents to be a leader who can champion the cause of women. I will*

*help other girls in the boarding home to understand gender equality and the constitutional provisions that guarantee equal rights for women."*

## India Leadership Academy

In India, our Leadership Academy students have benefitted from periodic trainings on special topics such as "Social Service," "Gender Identity and Expression through Theater/Drama," and "Environmental Consciousness & Community Impact." Additionally, each of the students' respective schools or boarding homes were given a small budget and an adult advisor to ensure that the youth meet regularly and plan service-related activities for the benefit of their peers and communities. The youth really stepped up to the task by organizing a number of thoughtful activities and events. Some groups staged dramas on important topics such as child abuse and alcoholism. One group made and sold greeting cards, and used the proceeds to help the beggars in their village. And others held rallies and marches about creating "Oxygen Zones" and the need to care for our environment.

## SAWED Radiance School

For the past several years Visions has been supporting the development of the SAWED Radiance School for Tribal and Dalit Children in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. This beautiful school opened in Spring 2013 and serves hundreds of highly disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access to such an education. It aims to provide a modern, holistic, and participatory learning experience for children who have known immense hardship, grinding poverty, social exclusion, and lack of access to basic services and rights.

For the third year running, Visions provided support for 3 teachers' salaries. This year we also sponsored the development of a playground (including soccer field and volleyball court) and introduction of a physical education program at the school—an initiative that will surely bring great joy and fulfillment to the lives of hundreds of Indian schoolchildren for years to come.

## Youth Scholarships

Visions also provided scholarships to 7 youth in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra from highly disadvantaged backgrounds who are pursuing undergraduate or post-graduate degrees. Along with financial support for their studies, students also received mentoring and counseling support from local partner organizations' staff.

## Short Documentaries Filming

Two volunteer student filmmakers from Carnegie Mellon University, Joe Hill & Kaytie Nielsen, recently spent several weeks in India filming a series of short documentaries on our education programs with three of our local partners. These films highlight our Scholarship Program, Leadership Academy, and the SAWED Radiance School for Tribal & Dalit Children, and are due to be released later this year.



**Joseph Sagayaraj**  
English Teacher Trainer

*"It has been a personally enriching experience for me as a trainer. I could feel that the Government teachers were happy about such trainings like those organized before they were appointed as teachers...I am happy that I was able to contribute by imparting basic English teaching skills to all the participants at their level."*

# 2015 Annual Summer Service Trip Opportunities

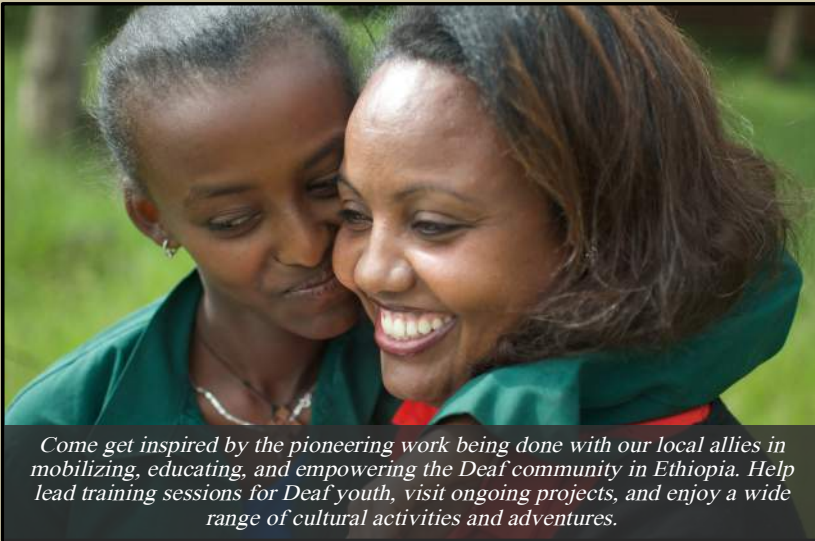
## INDIA

July 6<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
(11 nights/12 days)

\$1700/person \* Chennai, Thiruvannamalai,  
Thirukovilur, and Coimbatore



Experience the richness of South Indian culture & tradition, visit ongoing education projects, and join us in conducting youth leadership trainings for under-served Dalit children.



Come get inspired by the pioneering work being done with our local allies in mobilizing, educating, and empowering the Deaf community in Ethiopia. Help lead training sessions for Deaf youth, visit ongoing projects, and enjoy a wide range of cultural activities and adventures.

## ETHIOPIA

August 10<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015  
(12 nights/13 days)

\$1700/person \* Addis Ababa & Bahir Dar



For more info & to apply to join us abroad this summer:  
[www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org/international-opportunities](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org/international-opportunities)

*\*Trip program fees are exclusive of roundtrip airfare, visa, and any personal shopping*



## 2014 Financial Summary

### Support & Revenue

Contributions and Grants	\$180,359
In-Kind	\$3,641
Investments/Other	\$3
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$184,003</b>

### Expenses

Programs (Sri Lanka)	\$50,541
Programs (India)	\$14,533
Programs (Ethiopia)	\$5,182
Programs (Other)	\$6,250
Volunteer Programs (Ethiopia & India)	\$41,395
Administrative & Fundraising	\$17,572
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$135,473</b>

### Assets & Liabilities

Total assets	\$69,589
Total liabilities	\$54,289
Current net assets/funds balance	\$15,300

## "Voices of Empowerment"

*A Visions short documentary film*



Filed over the summer and scheduled for a Spring 2015 release, "Voices of Empowerment" is a short documentary film that brings forth the compelling stories and voices of the youth Visions serves in Sri Lanka, India, and Ethiopia. Highlighting the daily hardships and obstacles faced by these youth, this documentary features one inspiring story from each country.

**Join us in LA on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> for the premiere.**  
To learn more or to make a contribution, please visit:

[www.voices-of-empowerment.squarespace.com](http://www.voices-of-empowerment.squarespace.com)

## Current Program Needs



Leadership Academy:  
\$30/month per youth

Youth Scholarship:  
\$250/each per year

English Teacher Training:  
\$1500/training



Scholarship for Deaf Young Adult:  
\$250/each per year

Deaf Teacher or Interpreter Salary:  
\$300/month

Training Guide for Teachers of Deaf Students: \$10/copy



Leadership Academy:  
\$30/month per youth

English Program Manager: \$600/month

Leadership Program Manager: \$600/month

Youth Scholarship:  
\$350/each per year

Help us Invest in Tomorrow's Leaders...  
Make a Contribution Today!

1

Donate online or become a monthly sponsor at:

[www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment/donate](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment/donate)

2

Send a check made out to "Visions" to:

1621 Barry Ave. #PH1  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

A receipt will be issued promptly for your tax-exempt donation (federal tax ID#26-3386678). Thank you!

[www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org)