

## Continuing to Develop Audiology Services for the Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Gregory Buie, *Executive Director, Visions Global Empowerment*



For the past 7 years, Visions ([www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org)) has been working to empower and inspire change amongst the Deaf community in Ethiopia. While the primary focus has always been on education (for which Visions provides a growing array of services and support to Deaf students), it is undeniable that many Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals stand to benefit greatly from medical interventions and support. IMHO has been a committed and continual partner throughout the years, especially with regard to the ongoing development of audiological services in Bahir Dar – the capital city of the Amhara Region and home to more than 21 million people.

Under the leadership of volunteer consultant audiologist Dr. Catherine Clark (Rochester Institute of Technology) who has joined us annually at least once per year since 2014, continued training was provided to our privately funded Audiology Technician (who is Deaf himself) and other staff and volunteers in the community. This Audiology Technician has been providing continued support services to those who have already received a hearing aid on a year-round basis and began conducting hearing tests & counseling sessions with the assistance of an Interpreter. Additionally, in-kind audiological supplies valued at \$15,322 were donated this past year, including hearing aids, ear moulds, ear hooks, hearing aid batteries, wax removal kits, hearing aid programming devices, etc. To-date, hundreds of individuals have benefitted from these ongoing interventions.

No	Category	Sex		
		M	F	Total
1.	# of individuals who have received at least one hearing aid	69	58	127
2.	# of individuals accessing regular support and maintenance services	35	32	67
3.	# of individuals who received at least 1 hearing test / counseling	131	126	257
4.	#of individuals who received speech-language assessment and support	-	-	65

Visions also continued its partnership with the Ethio-Hearing Project based in Chicago this year in facilitating the donation of in-kind audiological and ENT surgical supplies valued at \$19,150 for the benefit of patients in Addis Ababa, Gondar and Bahir Dar. The Ethio-Hearing Project also came forward

with funding to directly support the training of 7 women with disabilities in Addis Ababa to become mobile hearing testing technicians, which Visions helped to facilitate in partnership with local partner EWDNA ([Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association](http://Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association)).

Also in 2018, as part of a 5-part short film series about deafness in Ethiopia produced by Visions, one such film focused on “Health” was released which explains deafness from a medical perspective. This film has been distributed in Amharic & English throughout the entire Amhara Region for the benefit of government workers, schools, universities, hospitals, NGOs, etc. The national TV channel (ETV) also did a 30-minute special that aired nationally on several occasions about “Deafness in Ethiopia” which focused almost entirely on our work in Bahir Dar! This short film can be viewed online at:

- English version: <https://youtu.be/l-j4enIUMBM>
- Amharic version: <https://youtu.be/hxtFCS-YqVY>

In May 2018, Visions hosted a 2-day “*Symposium of Hearing Loss & Deaf Empowerment in Ethiopia*” in Newport Beach, California with professionals in many related fields in attendance, including audiology, speech-language pathology, interpreting, education and international development. Attendees set forth goals for continuing to develop services in these fields in partnership with local and international allies.



Looking to the immediate future, we are planning to strengthen our relationship with the Ethio-Hearing Project and Felege Hiwot Hospital in Bahir Dar in particular in shifting our ongoing hearing testing & counseling services to a separate facility, as well as continuing to support other ongoing efforts to strengthen audiology and ENT services throughout the country. All of this is in addition to the ongoing education work that we continue to enable, which is now being expanded to Addis Ababa (Ethiopia’s capital city) and Awassa (capital city of the Southern Nations Region).

On behalf of our entire Visions Board of Directors, local staff and partners, and the Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals we serve, we wish to extend our deep appreciation to IMHO and warmest regards as you celebrate another year of incredible global humanitarian work. The work of IMHO in serving some of the world’s most vulnerable communities over these past 16 years is truly commendable, and we hope that your vital support for our ongoing work in Ethiopia will continue for many years to come.

