

40 Years



Project Mercy
starts with the One

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover Photo

One of the many faces receiving hope and as her story continues to be written, she is growing to find a better narrative not only for her, but for her potential family, her people, and other women just like her.



Vision

The vision of Project Mercy is to “renew the heart of a nation by plucking out poverty.” The organization has evolved its model in rural Ethiopia to address the root causes of poverty through integrated and holistic community development built on a foundation of listening and responding, combined with active participation and contribution by the people who benefit.

Chairman & President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Everyone has a story! Project Mercy's God-ordained story started 41 years ago with two refugees who wanted to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people exiled and suffering in refugee camps with little to eat, no clean water to drink, ramshackle tents over their heads, and no hope for a better life. This is the context in which Project Mercy started as an aid agency, with the aim to provide for their needs as an extension of Christ's love. Nearly two decades later, Project Mercy had transformed into a holistic development organization, based in Ytebon, Ethiopia, with an expanded mission to root out poverty nation-wide.

Project Mercy's transformation could not have come at a better time for the people of Ytebon. The Communist Regime had just been ousted from Ethiopia, the country was in shambles, and any progress made since the end of the Second World War had been decimated. Yet Project Mercy brought an audacious promise of hope and restoration and was driven to action by love for the people.

Donors and volunteers who have partnered with us are a major part of the story and without their significant contributions, Project Mercy would not be where it is today. Where Project Mercy serves rural communities in Ethiopia today, a mother takes sanctuary in a maternity waiting home until she gives birth in a clean and professionally staffed hospital; opportunity for education awaits the child starting pre-K; school meals ensure students are fully prepared to learn, and preventive and curative care at the school clinic helps to keep them healthy; clean water is available at school as well as at home; parents are trained, based on research at the Project Mercy compound, on how to cultivate and serve nutritionally improved meals at home and sell the excess raw material that they produce to be economically empowered; people get to and from centers of education, healthcare, markets, and jobs on paved roads. All of this is made possible because of you and your support.

Many of our partners have traveled to Ethiopia and witnessed first-hand the miracle of Project Mercy. As you read through the stories of change for 2017, we hope you will be blessed as you see all the difference YOU along with our Heavenly Father are making. Thank you for everything you have done and everything you will do to partner with us for continued impact in the lives of the people of Ethiopia.

God bless you for your partnership,



Gary Darmstadt, M.D.
Chairman of the Board
Project Mercy



Bete Demeke
President
Project Mercy



Left to Right: Gary, Marta, Sarah, and Deme.

Gary Darmstadt

As part of our family's story, my wife, Teri, and I met Deme at a dinner arranged by common friends and then met Marta too at the National Prayer Breakfast 22 years ago. Our families met soon thereafter and a powerful bond of love was formed with a shared vision to make an impact to eliminate poverty in Ethiopia. Both Teri and my daughters, Emilia and Sarah, have traveled to Ethiopia several times, volunteered at Project Mercy, and come away with life-changing experiences. Emilia's inspiration to apply computer science and technology for social good, and Sarah's thoughts of a career in medicine and global health as she enters college this fall were all cultivated in Yetebon. We have all been inspired and compelled to support the work of Marta, Deme, their family, and Project Mercy's transformative work in Ethiopia. Now we are humbled and honored to serve on the Board.



Bete Demeke

Our family has so many stories to tell, and you've read or heard about some of them over the years. My favorites are the stories that involve the selfless teaching, sharing, and healing we see every day in Ethiopia. Your prayers, resources, and time are changing and saving lives daily. Thank you so much for being a part of our story for nearly 41 years. We have so many more stories yet to come!





Our Founder's

“When we are out of Ethiopia, what do you want us to do God?” -*Marta*

“When we are out of Ethiopia, what do you want us to do God?” Marta prayed as she, along with her family, was escaping Ethiopia because of the Communist threat. Her answer would come later.

From a young age, Marta was groomed to serve her homeland. Her parents wanted her to do well in school, so she could later work for the government. She was the first woman appointed to the senate in Ethiopia, and she also held numerous other government positions.

Marta married Peter Myhre, a Norwegian missionary who became the Minister of Education in Ethiopia. The couple was blessed with two

sons, Sam and Mickey, but sadly, after Marta returned to Ethiopia in 1958, Peter passed away.

Demeke Tekle-Wold (Deme) met Marta at Adams State College while she was studying in the U.S. They became friends. Deme later transferred and graduated from Western Washington College. He then worked as the Director General of Ministry of Commerce and Industry within the Ethiopian Government. After the death of her husband, Marta and Deme reconnected and eventually married on January 31, 1959. They were blessed with two children. While in Ethiopia, Deme owned and operated a coffee and hard bean business. In 1974, the

Communists came to power and the family fled Ethiopia a year later. During their journey, they crossed into Kenya as refugees. In 1976, a church in Fort Wayne sponsored the family--Marta, Deme, Mickey, Bete and Lali--to come to the U.S.

In 1977, Marta and Deme joined Chuck and Fran Dickinson for breakfast. Chuck and Fran had served as Allen County Indiana's Jail Chaplain and were now serving as Executive Directors for the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission (homeless shelter), a position they held for 20 years.

At that breakfast, Marta and Deme shared their vision of helping the refugees forced to flee Ethiopia from Communism and famine. The Dickinson's passion for helping people matched that of Marta's and Deme's. And the four shared the vision for a refugee relief program. Fran and Marta went to Sudan to assess the needs of the Ethiopian famine victims crossing the border. After the trip, Marta, Fran, Chuck and Deme started Project Mercy on September 9, 1977.

In the early years, Chuck would open every board meeting with a word of prayer. He was a graduate of St. Paul's Bible College and had received an honorary doctorate from The Rescue Mission.

In June 1980, Chuck went to be with the Lord. Fran continues to serve on the board as an Emeriti member and resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Through the Dickinsons, Marta's question to the Lord was answered.

"It is often said that Marta dreams the vision and Deme works to make it happen."



Left to Right: Co-Founders Frances and Chuck Dickinson early on in the formative years of Project Mercy.

She and Deme would serve their homeland from the U.S. with the founding of Project Mercy. It is often said that Marta dreams the vision and Deme works to make it happen. Today, they are still involved in the Ministry along with their children Bete, Lali and Yemi.

HOUSE KIDS



Ashenafi enjoying a hike.

Project Mercy salutes the university graduation of Seble and Samson, two of our former “house kids” who attended our elementary and high school and went on to further their education. Seble and Samson are siblings and high achievers. Seble now has a degree in Accounting, and her brother, Samson, has graduated from Addis Ababa University where he studied Anesthesiology.

They came to Project Mercy over 25 years ago. Their mother and two other sisters had died and their father was struggling with his grief. Marta invited the children to live at the compound, which their father saw as a blessing. As house kids, the children began receiving the love that comes with an expanded family and a quality education.

Seble and Samson are only two of the many children Project Mercy has helped to realize a bright future.

Project Mercy currently houses, educates and cares for 30 children at the Yetebon compound. Some of the children are orphans; others have parents, but their families are unable to care for them adequately. Despite their challenges, the children are “warm and welcoming” in the words of Sophia Monaghan, a long-term volunteer who tutored the house kids from October 2017 through June 2018. As they grow older, many of the children give back to the community by teaching literacy, HIV/AIDS prevention, basic arithmetic and backyard gardening to families in the hard-to-reach mountain areas surrounding Yetebon.

The children are eager to learn and for some, their education at Medhane-Alem School is the stepping stone to higher educational pursuits. Many of the children — just like Seble and Samson — have gone on to attend college and have successful careers

<u>House Children at Yetebon</u>	30
Girls	14
Boys	16

Lydia, Selam, and Sarah.



EDUCATION



Ethiopia suffers from low levels of literacy overall, and this challenge is more prominent in rural villages. Today, in a country with a population of over 100 million people, just under half are literate. For women, that number is about 40 percent.

So, it makes sense that education is a core component of Project Mercy's model. Education is integrated holistically into all programs and services. Project Mercy manages its own school (kindergarten through 12th grade) and supports five other schools in Ethiopia. In addition, education is

pervasive throughout Project Mercy's healthcare, food security, vocational training, child care, and infrastructure development programs.

In 1996, Project Mercy opened the Medhane-Alem school in Yetebon, a kindergarten and primary school, initially serving 358 students. Today, the school serves over 1,600 students. Some 1,400-plus are now in pre-kindergarten through primary school and almost 200 students attend the high school.

*(Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics)
(March 13, 2016)*

Medhane-Alem School

Total Number of Students: Grades 1-8: 1,152
Pre-Kindergarten: 60 Grades 9-12: 197
Kindergarten: 220

Summer Literacy Program

Student Teachers: 32
Community Adults Taught: 200

National Exam Students Passed

8th Grade: 60 out of 64
10th Grade: 50 out of 53
12th Grade: 21 out of 42

School Meal Program

Meals each school day: 1,432

STEM CLUB

Project Mercy places special emphasis on science and technology, recognizing that children's abilities in these areas will be crucial to their success in finding jobs and building careers. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Club allows children to receive special tutoring in these subjects.

The Club is an adjunct to regular classroom learning. Monday through Thursday, older children receive lessons in math, biology, chemistry and physics, with demonstrations and pictures employed to explain concepts in accessible terms. Children in grades two through five are drilled in their multiplication tables. Though hard at first, the children are now having fun, and two eight-year-old girls can recite their multiplication tables in under four minutes. The children also are learning to type on a keyboard, which they all find very exciting.



HEALTH SCIENCE COLLEGE

Project Mercy's Health Science College is a 100 percent scholarship program that teaches, trains, and graduates midwives. Students are recruited from rural communities and agree upfront to return to their communities after graduation and serve in remote health centers, clinics, and hospitals to increase the level and quality of care for birthing mothers and their babies.

To date, Project Mercy graduated 68 midwives and delivered in-service training to 530 professionals to upgrade their skills.

In October 2017, the Health Science College graduated 51 students from the Midwifery program; 84 percent of the graduates achieved the highest ranking of Center of Competence (COC) Level Four Certification. The newly graduated midwives returned to the rural villages and are assisting in deliveries, conducting antenatal consultations, and giving family planning advice as well as treatments. In their first three months on the job, 27 of the graduates treated and helped 5,544 mothers. This year, 45 students enrolled in the midwifery program.



WALKING | PROUD

What is in the power of a pair of shoes? For Mabazash, a kindergartener, shoes are life changing! At four years old, she was missing a few toenails due to a fungal infection. Her plastic shoes did not protect her feet against scabies (an infectious skin infestation). Simply put, her feet were sore!

Fortunately, Nurse Katie at the school clinic scrubbed Mabazash's feet with clean, soapy water. In her young life, not even her mother had cleaned her feet. Next, Katie examined and banded her feet. Lastly, she got her prize possession: a pair of TOMS Shoes! A few days later, Mabazash took our Ethiopian Nurse, Beza, to her home. As they walked along the road, Mabazash cleaned any dirt off her new shoes. She was so proud of them!

VOLUNTEERS

Three times a year, Project Mercy is blessed with volunteer medical personnel from Gunderson Global

Partners and Bay Area Medical Missions (BAMM). The volunteers visit for two weeks each and perform essential health checks for our students.

In October 2017, a massive line was waiting for Dr. Moore and his dental hygienist, Karla, to start working. It was their first day, one of the boys needed a tooth extracted. After the procedure, he asked, "Could I please have my tooth?"

Dr. Moore and Karla inquired what he would do with it. Like the tradition of children in the Western World who place a tooth under their pillow in hopes the Tooth Fairy will come, children in Ethiopia throw their teeth on the roof in hopes that a special bird will pick them up and bring them a new shiny "smart" tooth.

The Gunderson Global Partners performed 500 dental exams and assessed the health of 159 high school students and education staff. BAMM volunteers also screened

900 students for dental issues with 149 needing treatment.

In addition, the volunteers screened nearly 1,000 elementary school students and staff and dispensed almost 2,000 medications. The most common student health issues were lice, goiters and eye and ear infections.



KATIE FARKA & OUR SCHOOL CLINIC

It's a long way from Wisconsin to Ethiopia, but Katie Farka, R.N., our long-term volunteer, has been interested in medical mission work since college. She twice visited Yetebon, as a Gundersen Global Partner volunteer on short missions and saw a need for a clinic at Medhane-Alem School, as well as a medical liaison to work with hospital staff and traveling medical mission groups.

through eight. Between late March and mid-May of 2018 alone, over 500 children visited the clinic—an average of 16 students a day. Most are treated for scabies, wounds and ear and eye complaints.

As an unexpected advantage, the clinic has become a safe place for kids to come and discuss their day-to-day challenges.

It seemed a natural extension to volunteer for a two-year stint and take on those challenges herself. "I thought that if I could start the school clinic in my first year, I could use my second year to make it sustainable with in-country staff," Katie said.



Katie and the Project Mercy staff outfitted and dedicated the school clinic in October 2017, six months after she arrived. The clinic, which officially opened in February 2018, is available to our 1,100 school children in grades one

Student Needs

Number of TOM Shoes Distributed in 2017:	1,927
Number of Students with Medical Physicals:	1,159
Dental Exams :	1,400
Students Needing Dental Treatment:	149

HEALTHCARE

11,422 HOSPITAL VISITS



One of the 11,422 visits to the hospital in 2017 was Dagem who suffered severe burns resulting in the amputation of both legs. Marta first met Dagem when she was visiting a cousin who happened to be in the hospital bed next to his. She promised to help the 13-year-old boy, but Dagem was released before she could get his contact information. One day, Marta received a call from a friend of Project Mercy who told her about Dagem and how he had met a lady who said she would help him. Her friend asked whether it was Marta as it seemed like something she would promise. The next day Marta and Bete drove 65 kilometers (40 miles) to Addis Ababa to visit Dagem. She found him

languishing, not even able to take care of his toilet needs.

Two years after his accident, Project Mercy transferred Dagem to our hospital where he could use a western style toilet. He received a walker and was fitted for prosthetic legs. He is now relearning how to walk and awaiting his permanent prosthetics. Dagem will have greater mobility and the possibility of a brighter future due to the care provided by Project Mercy.

Healthcare access to Ethiopia's population is limited especially in remote villages such as Yetebon. The doctor-to-patient ratio is one-to-



Healthcare

Number of Encounters:	11,422
Total Number of Laboratory Test:	4,316
Total Number of X-Rays	2,460
Total Number of Births:	621
Number of C-Section Births:	70
Lie-In-Wait Home Admissions:	19
Total Number of Surgeries:	482

every-4,045 individuals, which is below the World Health Organization standard of one doctor to 1,000 patients. Project Mercy's 52-bed hospital is critical to the village and the surrounding areas.

SOPHIA MONAGHAN

In 2017, we had a record year for births! One hundred ninety-five babies were born in 2015 compared to 551 in 2017. More families are taking advantage of free pre-natal care, thus decreasing our number of high-risk pregnancy and our Lie-In-Wait admission by 50 percent.

In October, we welcomed Sophia Monaghan, a recent graduate of Stanford,



to volunteer for nine months. Sophia's primary focus has been learning how post-partum mothers function emotionally. She used a 20-question survey developed by the World Health Organization and translated into Amharic. Sister (Nurse) Meseret integrated the questions into the mothers' checkups 45 days after giving birth. Sophia's research shows that 17 percent reported four or more mood disorders and 30 percent reported extreme fatigue. Sophia feels new mothers would benefit from some manner of emotional support. She will be sharing her findings for further discussion.

FOOD SECURITY

A STORY OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Life in the rural farming area of ChaCha, Ethiopia can be very difficult, especially for Yenenesh, a widow with two children. Yenenesh was among the first of five families chosen to receive a six-month pregnant crossbred heifer, and it changed her life. Once the heifer gave birth, it began yielding 12 liters of milk per day and became a great new source of nutrition for her family. Yenenesh was also able to generate income from the sale of excess milk. Over a three-year period, Yenenesh's crossbred heifer gave birth to three female heifers, and the first-born calf has also given birth. The family now has five animals with a sixth calf on the way.

The increased income from the sale of excess milk has enabled her family to build a tin-roof home and move out of their mud hut.

Food security programs such as the Dairy Cattle Breeding Project continue to expand and have enabled more

Ethiopian families to produce a variety of dairy products for their families and earn income from the sale of butter and milk at the market.

Since 2013, crossbred heifers have been delivered to 84 families. Crossbred cows can produce up to 14 liters of milk per day compared to indigenous cows that produce one-to-two liters per day.

In 2017, 35 crossbred heifers were provided to farming families in ChaCha for a total of 88 crossbred heifers. In addition, 67 families were trained in caring for the animals, as well as in hygiene and sanitation and managing, processing and distributing milk, cheese and butter.



FRUIT TREE PROJECT

The demonstration gardens and the Fruit Tree Project also help sustain the nutritional needs of community families, as well as the students who benefit from both. The gardens have become a world-class teaching, training and testing area helping the local farmers learn to farm effectively and test new sustainable crops. As part of the training, each community member of Yetebon donates time every month and tends to the garden to keep it growing. In 2017, nearly 170 avocado fruit trees were distributed to families to be planted in their back yards.



SCHOOL MEALS

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade receive two meals a day. School feeding is made more sustainable because parents contribute voluntary hours to help grow crops on the land next to the school. This produces nearly two tons of food. They also help to prepare meals for the children. Their participation not only decreases the cost of providing the meals for the children, but it also improves their farming and food preparation skills. We invite them to be partners in the provision of this critical service to their children.



Food Security

Total number in the herd:	343
Number of heifers-distributed in 2017:	35
Total number of cross bred heifers distributed :	88
Additional families trained to care for a heifer:	67
Fruit Saplings distributed:	170
Types of Saplings:	Avocado

SKILLS TRAINING

Every morning for the past 70 plus years, Sebretea gets up and gathers firewood. She then puts the heavy loads on her back and treks down the mountain, at least a four-mile walk. Her goal is to sell the wood to neighbors and others in Yetebon in hope of getting enough money to support herself and her family. This is the only way for her family to get income!

The story above was the reality before Project Mercy started their Skills Training Program. Today, Sebretea makes baskets that are masterpieces. She dyes the reeds with a specific design in mind and weaves the baskets by hand. The whole process takes a month to complete. Other ladies in the program make glass

beads and embroider napkins. The gentlemen gain skills in bee hiving, masonry, and wood working.

As an organization, Project Mercy also provides classes to teach literacy and simple math. The program lasts 45 days and is taught by the students from our high school. Many of the elderly in the village never attended school. Six out of 10 women ages 15-49 are unable to read and write, and in communities such as Yetebon, 57 percent of women have no formal schooling. Education is the golden ticket, no matter one's age.

Source: (The Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey 2016, P. 33 and 34)



Skills

Basket Artist:	22
Bracelet Artist:	14
Embroidery	3
Bee Hiving	1
Masonry	1
Wood/Metal Working	1

Summer Literacy Program

Student Teachers:	32
Community Taught Adults:	200



INFRASTRUCTURE

Project Mercy serves nearly 70,000 people living within a two-hour radius on foot. Many of the residents live in the distant, rugged mountains that surround Project Mercy.

Until the main road was built in 1993, there was no road, only donkey paths. It used to take a day and a half to reach Project Mercy. However, thanks to Project Mercy and its volunteers, the ride down the new gravel road that connects Ytebon with the outside world takes only 15 minutes.

When pared down to its essentials, infrastructure consists of the most basic support systems needed to keep a country's economy running smoothly. Such support systems include those things many of us give little or no thought to including buildings, passable roads, bridges, clean water-supply, waste management, electricity, communications and the like. Simply put, the stronger a country's support system is, the better developed that country will be.

Over the past few years, Project Mercy has developed 25 kilometers of roads providing community members access to community development services, the ability to safely reach critical healthcare services and efficiently get to and from work. The community also benefits from four reservoirs built in 2016 with each capable of storing 100,000 liters of water that are channeled to 20 water distribution sites.

While no significant infrastructure projects were undertaken in 2017, Project Mercy was able to share its blueprints and best practices related to building schools with several communities. A new school replicating our High School and Health Science College was opened in 2017.



Project Mercy
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