

AMBO LAZARIST DEAF SCHOOL END OF YEAR REPORT 2017 -18



AN

EXTRAORDINARY YEAR!

AUGUST 2017: HEADING

Visit to the rural districts to assess the situation of Deaf children.

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Some of the Deaf children who gathered to meet us at Enchine. (3.5-hour bus journey from Ambo).

Our visit to the rural districts revealed the reality of so many Deaf children living in what can only be described as 'double isolation'. Not only were they living in isolated communities, but were also living isolated lives within those communities. This was due to the fact that people in rural areas often associate deafness or disability as a curse. Very few of the children we met had ever been to school as neither their parents nor the teachers in the local schools considered them capable of learning. Speaking to the parents of the children in their local

language, our highlighted the people have the parents Ambo and the the capacity for fully and equally society. Given support, their ability to learn as some of the



Meeting some of the Deaf children living in the rural district of Gedo

was being said very challenging, the majority seemed relieved to learn this information and desperate for their child to receive such an opportunity. Indeed begged us to build such a school in their district. The social affairs employees mentioned that there were many more Deaf children registered with them, however some of them were too afraid to travel from their homes to attend these meetings.

principal Mr Eshetu many misconceptions that about deafness. He also told about the Deaf school in potential it has to unlock their children to participate in both education and the right educational Deaf child has the same their hearing siblings. While parents found a lot of what

SEPTEMBER 2017: HEADING

New Students Register at the ALDS

A New Space at Lydia's Place.

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After our visit to the rural districts, we anticipated about 5 or 6 students might register at the school. We were genuinely a little shocked and of course delighted when day after day new students turned up at the gate of the school asking to be registered.

ew students who
ed at the ALDS

Over a period of two weeks 22 new students enrolled at the school. The majority of these had arranged to stay with relations living in the town. A number had been accompanied to Ambo by an older sibling and were renting small houses close to the school. (Some of the student sponsorship money goes towards paying the cost of rental accommodation for the rural Deaf children).



A typical mud hut house in Ambo

We had a slight concern about whether the new and the old students would mix together. However, within a few weeks nearly all of the newcomers had settled in and new friendships had been formed, these friendships have only been strengthened over the school term. Unfortunately a couple of the children found it difficult to adjust or their parents missed them and so they returned home. We are hopeful that we might be able to welcome them back some time in the future.



ar students are
a bit of attitude!

One of the biggest joys of working at the school this year has been the opportunity to observe the children from the countryside discover themselves at the school, begin to use signs and build friendships, to discover a language that allows them to learn and access subjects such as maths and English etc.

Lydia's Place.

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September also saw Lydia's Place become a space that was available to the children. They enjoyed the fact that it was a much more free and fluid space (we were using water based paints for the art classes...) It also proved really popular for the children to learn maths through the Numicon method. They could gather around tables and engage in learning with each other.

As mentioned above the space was also ideal for the organising of the workshop for teachers. There is a TV in the room which is used for showing some educational videos, but they love



when we put on Charlie Chaplain... It's also the space for craft work and using the Kindle Tablets. We hope to put in a white board next Sept, it will be a sort of break out space from the formal setting of the classrooms...

OCTOBER 2017: HEADING

First Rural Outreach Day At The ALDS.

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For those rural Deaf children not lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend the school we organised a 'Rural Outreach Program'. We invited the children, their parents and social affairs employees to visit the Deaf school and participate in a day of fun and learning. It proved to be a huge success and was repeated five times during the school year. Again, it was

a privilege to be able to observe so many children arrive at the school; nervous and a little overawed by the welcome they received from our students. However, they quickly began to see themselves reflected in our students, could see that there was a means of communication that was accessible to them and were soon fully involved in playing some sports, trying to learn a Sign or two.



Fiona Broderick and her husband Matthew attended our final Rural Outreach Day in July. Fiona works at the Irish Embassy in Addis. The Embassy have been very supportive of the school.

However, another vital part of the program was the opportunity to meet with the parents of the children and facilitate them in discussing their concerns about their Deaf child, the problems they encounter in the local community, their exclusion from education etc. All of them agreed that having the opportunity to come to the school had really opened their minds to the potential their child possesses. They were intrigued to see the students who are already attending the school display just how capable they are when given the proper support in learning. A boarding facility at the ALDS would allow so many of these children the

opportunity to prove their own abilities.

NOVEMBER 2017 : HEADING

Margaret Farrell organises a series of 'Numicon' workshops for the Teachers and a celebration to mark the graduation of our first group of students from the ALDS (FIXED TEXT when you click on the info below drops down)



In the afternoons, she facilitated a wonderful series of workshops,

Teaching maths to our pre-school children.

Ms Margaret Farrell, a retired teacher for the Deaf from Dublin returned to the to the ALDS to volunteer for a second time. She spent over three weeks at the school teaching in the mornings and

introducing the teachers in both the Deaf School and the Kindergarten school to the 'Numicon'

method of teaching maths. A kind benefactor in Ireland had donated a complete set of Numicon aids to the school. We used 'Lydia's Space' for the workshops and it proved to be ideal for allowing the teachers interact and engage with each other She also introduced our older students in Grade 8 to Circular Weaving. Indeed it could be said, that Margaret has now woven herself into the hearts of the students and teachers here at the ALDS.



Numicon Workshop for the teachers.

Grade 8 Graduation. (FIXED TEXT when you click on the info below drops down)



Celebrating the graduation of our Grade 8 students. Our first group to take the Government exam.

We celebrated the first group of students to participate in state exams and to graduate from the school. The students are now in Grade 9 at the government school. However, they are struggling to adapt, as they do not have the necessary back up, support and understanding. Unfortunately we are not in a position to offer education at these grades, as it would require the building new classrooms, employing new teachers and upgrading our facilities. We have arranged to offer the teachers, staff and students at the government school a course in

Deaf Awareness Training and to offer any teachers who might be interested

to participate in an Ethiopian Sign Language course. (In May and June we arranged for the teachers at the ALDS to provide tutorials for the students as they prepared for their grade 9 exams).

FEBRUARY: HEADING

A New Beginning – A New Uniform. (FIXED TEXT when you click on the info below drops down)



Our students were delighted with their bright new uniforms.

With so many new students coming to the school, we decided to update our uniform to something a little more colourful and uplifting... the students were delighted with the new colour. Having 52 students leave the school each day and head down dressed as smartly and brightly as they were, caused a bit of stir... that they were signing and smiling made an even bigger impression. In Ambo each school is clearly defined by its uniform and there is no mistaking ours!

MARCH: HEADING

St. Patrick's Gala Ball. (FIXED TEXT when you click on the info below drops down)

This year the Irish Association in Ethiopia chose the ALDS to be one of the



Eileen, Fionnuala and Angela. Two of Fr. Stephen's sisters and a good friend helped put together a display for the Patrick's Day Gala Ball highlighting the work of the ALDS

beneficiaries of the annual St. Patrick's Gala Ball. It was a wonderful evening and an opportunity for us to let people know about the needs of Deaf people, the work of the school in Ambo and to celebrate the very close connection between Ireland and Ambo. Recently the Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ms Sonya Hyland presented a cheque for over €8000 to the school (proceeds from the Ball) Fr. Stephen's two sisters and a friend were visiting him at the time and helped to put together a display highlighting the work of the Deaf School. They also had a great evening celebrating with over 600 guests who had paid to attend the Ball. We are keeping our fingers

crossed that the ALDS will be chosen as beneficiaries again next year....

APRIL – MAY HEADING

Throughout the year, but most especially in the months of April and May there was a great deal of civil unrest in the Oromo region and Ambo town. Without going into the political issues that led to the problems, the resulting disturbances meant that all schools in the region were closed for long periods of time. I estimate that the students missed a total of 8 weeks of education. Thankfully the year has ended with the restoration of peace and calm and people are very excited about the appointment of the new Prime Minister Mr Abiy. It is hoped that the reforms he is implementing will be a new dawn for Ethiopia.

JUNE: HEADING
Schools Immersion Program.

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During the months of June and July students from two Vincentian Secondary Schools in Dublin joined us: St. Vincent's Castleknock and St. Paul's Raheny. Each school spent two and a half weeks in Ambo facilitating a summer school for all the local children, teaching them English and maths and generally having some fun. A significant highlight of their time in Ambo was the opportunity to go to the Deaf school where our students took time to teach them Ethiopian Sign Language. The Irish boys very quickly picked up the basics in Ethiopian Sign Language allowing them the opportunity to really engage with the Deaf students and even teach some maths classes. Of course there was the annual Ireland V Ethiopia football match to be played, a very competitive affair. (Ethiopia won 5-4)



One of the pupils from St. Vincent's College teaching maths at the ALDS

Exams and Graduation of Grade 8 Students.

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Grade 8.

In June our second group of Grade 8 Students participated in the State Exams and graduated from the ALDS. They are anxiously awaiting the results, which will decide if they can progress to Grade 9 at the government school next year. We are of course sorry to see them go, but delighted we were able to give them the opportunity to progress this far in their education. We will continue to support them in what way possible. We wont have a graduation class again for four years. In the mean time we will examine the possibility of providing grades 9/10 at the ALDS for students graduating in 2022.

A Visit From Professor Lorraine Leeson.
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Visit from Lorraine Leeson (A Professor at Trinity College)

We were delighted to welcome Ms Lorraine Leeson to the school for a brief visit. She received the usual warm and Ambo welcome and the students were delighted that she possessed some ability to communicate with them. Lorraine set up the School of Deaf Studies at Trinity College and is a professor of linguistics. She was able to identify something special happening in the development of Sign Language here at the ALDS. We hope to keep in touch and explore some links between Ambo and Trinity College...

THANK YOU

As we said, it's been an extraordinary year here at the ALDS, your generosity and support in making a donation or sponsoring one of he children has allowed such a thing to happen. Thanks so much for your on-going support, we hope you are justifiably proud of what you yourself have helped achieve here in Ambo.



Barakat celebrates his arrival at the ALDS



Ababoo celebrates his graduation from ALDS 2018.



Grade 4



e 8



Pre-School



le 2

