

School offers “bright hope” to children in Ethiopian village

March 6, 2009

BANTU, Ethiopia—This year, impoverished children in one Ethiopian village have something they've never known before—hope for the future.

Getahun Tesema, director of Buckner Ethiopia (right), poses with Ethiopian President Girma Wolde Giorgis at the inauguration ceremony to celebrate the opening of a new school in Bantu, Ethiopia. (PHOTOS/BUCKNER)

Children attending the Bantu school, founded by Buckner International and Bright Hope, receive two meals a day, two school uniforms, daytime clothing, shoes, schoolbooks and supplies, personal hygiene materials and medical treatment.

“The people in this community earn about \$11 a month,” said Bright Hope project manager Nebiyou Tesfaye. Isolated on a muddy dirt road, the community is occupied by farmers, walking barefoot with large bales of crops on their backs, and dozens of small children.

Ethiopian President Girma Wolde-Giorgis gave the land in Bantu to Buckner in 2006 to build the school for the community. But it's much more than just a school.

“We are the ones who provide them with food, showers, soap, drinking water, clothes, shoes, vaccinations, everything,” Tesfaye said.

At the school, 200 children ages 4 to 7 learn everything from math to English in eight classrooms.

After morning classes end, all the children line up single file with their hands on each other's shoulders to walk across the way to the dining hall. There they receive their largest meal of the day—a bowl of rice.



In addition to studying English, Amharic, math, phonics and other subjects, children also receive food, clothing and medical treatment at the Bantu school.

(PHOTOS/BUCKNER)

Café manager Fikru Gebremariam said most of the children do not have food at home.

"Food is important for the children because it builds their bodies and makes them strong," he said.

Marta Admasu, the principal of the school, explained the community's growing excitement since the school opened.

"We are experiencing great happiness at this time. The children have food, soap, shoes, toothbrushes, clothing. Because of this, they feel very happy."

In addition to education, Tesfaye said, they help the community by "teaching them about sanitation and how to prevent disease and infection."



A child at the Bantu school leads his class to recite the English numeric system.

(PHOTOS/BUCKNER)

Future plans for the school include building a house for guests and mission teams who choose to work with the children short term. They also hope to give the school “international” status, teaching American and British curricula, along with others, to promote future growth opportunities for students. The school’s ultimate goal is for every child to go to college.

“We desperately need books for the teachers and for the students,” Tesfaye said. “We need workbooks and educational books. If we want them to go to college, they need to read.”

Kyle Henderson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Athens, is part of the Buckner E-Team, a group of churches that helped support construction of the new school project and attended the inauguration in February.

Two years ago, he stood on an empty field with a group of pastors and the president of Ethiopia in the same location where a thriving school and

community center resides today.

"I got to stand in a completed school with hundreds of children being reached," Henderson said. "They recited English letters, numbers and animals. In just a few months, these kids have moved from dirt floors and no teaching aids to qualified teachers, in excellent facilities, and a new future."