Part I: Preliminary Information

Title: Improving Aid Effectiveness to Africa: A Culturally-informed, Skills-based Non-Governmental Organization to Empower Homeless Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Names:

Abstract: African states have received over 1 trillion dollars in foreign aid over the past 60 years, but their poverty has increased and per capita income in 2010 was lower than in 1960 (Moyo 2010). In the 1980s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged as a potentially more promising form of aid delivery. Unfortunately, by the 1990s, many NGOs were failing to alleviate poverty because they were modeled after those in wealthier countries, but without the volunteerism motive, necessary skills, or reflection of countries’ cultures or ways of organizing (Makoba 2011). The applicant is using an inherited property and Ward Award funds to establish, staff, and outfit a NGO, Tesfa Residential Home, in Addis Ababa to assist homeless women. A Leadership Prize will enable the applicant gain the specialized training to add an entrepreneurial skills development program to her NGO to support residents’ income generation and the organization’s sustainability.

Part II: Problem Description and Personal Statement

A. Problem Description

Africa has the largest concentration of low-income and highly-indebted countries in the world. Foreign aid has done little to change that situation and some scholars argue that aid has heightened the crisis in Africa by creating dependency and supporting corrupt leaders (Easterly 2007, Moyo 2010).

Widespread poverty, hunger, and limited access to health services have contributed to Africans’ high disease burden and poor health. Ethiopia has a population of 91,729,000 with a life expectancy of only 59 to 62 years. Many die needlessly from preventable diseases with existing cures due to malnutrition and lack of access to health care, including vaccinations (WHO, 2013). Fully 45 percent of Ethiopia’s people live below the poverty line and “eighty-two percent of the population lives on under a dollar a day” (Wamai, 2009, p. 279). Consequently, the majority of Ethiopians cannot afford basic necessities such as food and shelter, and three-quarters of them lack access to clean water (Alwina, n.d.).

Ethiopia’s rapidly growing cities have large populations of poor and homeless. Addis Ababa contains an estimated 50,000 homeless (Fekadu et al., 2014). UN Habitat points to the centralization of employment and services in Addis Ababa as a major cause of rural to urban migration. Unable to secure employment, many migrants end up homeless, vulnerable and isolated (Sustainable Development, 2012, p. 41).

Homelessness stigmatizes individuals and families. The homeless become susceptible to alcoholism, drugs, HIV, crime, mental ill-health, and sexual assault. People who are homeless in Addis Ababa live in dirty tents, slums, pipes, underpasses and along roadsides (Ali, 2013). Since most of these individuals migrated from rural areas many lack documentation to show proof of
residency or identity (Ali, 2013). The lack of documentation further increases their vulnerability, reducing access to employment and social services, and keeping them trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty (Sustainable Development, 2012, 42). Estranged from society and shunned by their communities, the homeless have very few options for support.

**Why past efforts have not been effective**

In the twenty-first century many African governments obtain 40 to 50 percent of their national budget in aid (Diamond 2009, viii; Falola and Achberger 2013, 201-202) and some rely on aid for as much as 97 percent of their government’s operating budget (Moyo 2010, 72). Such over-reliance on aid is arguably not only demeaning, but neo-colonial because African states often do not have all that much say in how the funds are spent (Calderisi 2007, 165-166).

Much aid has been given without proper research into what has succeeded and why (Riddell 2007: xvi-xvii). International aid to Africa is often culturally-uninformed, harmful to African countries’ economic growth, and undermines their ability to solve their own problems (Mwenda 2007). Zambian scholar and *Dead Aid* author, Dambisa Moyo, describes how outsiders often believe that good intentions suffice when it comes to giving, but their lack of understanding of local cultures can make their aid toxic. She offers the following poignant example:

“There’s a mosquito net maker in Africa. He manufactures around 500 nets a week. He employs ten people, who (as with many African countries) each have to support upwards of fifteen relatives. However hard they work, they can’t make enough nets to combat the malaria-carrying mosquito. The [donated] nets arrive, the nets are distributed, and a ‘good’ deed is done. With the market flooded with foreign nets, however, our mosquito net maker is promptly put out of business. His ten workers can no longer support their 150 dependents (who are now forced to depend on handouts), and one mustn’t forget that in a maximum of five years the majority of the imported nets will be torn, damaged and of no further use” (Moyo 2010, pp. 130-131).

The example above is not an exception; of the $525 billion that the World Bank has lent to developing countries since 1946, at least 25 percent has been ineffective (Moyo 2010, 52). Aid critics such as Moyo, and her 2012 co-author Ashdown, argue that not a single country has prospered, created jobs, or achieved sustainable economic growth just by relying on external aid.

**Personal Background and Motivation**

After I lost my parents at the age of six, I was forced to grow up very fast and raise my younger sister. We lived alone for about three years. I was responsible for taking my sister to school three miles away, cooking on an electric stove, and going to school part time. There were days we had no food because our remaining family members lived far away and did not know of our circumstances. Having personally faced hunger, neglect and poverty gives me a deeper understanding of what the homeless go through physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Five years and two orphanages later, I was granted a second chance at life when I was adopted by an American family in the fall of 2005. I am deeply aware of how privileged I am to be studying at a private liberal arts college. My privileged status in the USA has made me realize that I want to use my formal education to give back to my home country of Ethiopia.
In 2014, I was fortunate to visit Ethiopia over the summer to see some of my remaining family. During my visit I once again saw the hardship that the less fortunate face daily. I was able to critically examine what life would have been like for me had I stayed in Ethiopia. Everywhere I visited, I was constantly stopped by street children begging for change and food. Daily I was faced with the moral question of what my responsibility is as a human being and a scholar. I was there during the rainy season and saw many mothers and children with plastic bags over their bodies to shield them from the rain as they slept on the streets. I asked my aunt if the Ethiopian government provided help to these women and children, but she noted that there were insufficient funds and too many homeless for Ethiopia to adequately address the problem. Seeing the circumstances of the homeless has affected me on a personal level. I realize I could easily have been in that situation if an orphanage had not taken me in.

My experience in Ethiopia in 2014, Public Health major, and double minor in Policy Studies and Poverty and Social Justice, led me to propose to conduct independent research on homeless women’s obstacles to accessing healthcare in a sub-division of Addis Ababa. I have been resident in Ethiopia since late May, 2015. My research has IRB approval from Elon and the support of University of Addis Ababa faculty. To date I have: completed a summer internship with Association for the Rehabilitation of Girls (ARG), an Addis Ababa-based NGO with similar goals to the one I intend to create. I have determined that I cannot simply work within that NGO of 20 years to achieve my aims. I have initiated the complex and time-consuming process of formally registering my own NGO, which will be called Tesfa Residential Home (TRH). (Tesfa means hope in Amharic.)

TRH will be a transitional home for the homeless in the house I inherited from my deceased parents and which I am going to outfit and staff with a $10,000 Ward Family Learning in Action award that I received in the spring of 2015. TRH’s mission will be to provide a safe home that offers an atmosphere of care and promotes economic independence for women living on the streets of Addis Ababa.

To date, through interviews, I have identified the five women who will live in the home, future staff members including a cook, General Director, and Program Coordinator/Teacher, and am in the process of speaking with Addis Ababa University faculty to determine if they can offer counseling services. The homeless women are being involved in the design and implementation of the transitional home, so that it will be grassroots and community-based.

The safe home will provide medical care, intensive counseling, and basic literacy education and, with Leadership Prize funds to do so, a skill development training program to enable the women to generate their own income and become economically self-sufficient. Funds from a Leadership Prize are vital to TRH because the final goal is to reintegrate the homeless women back into society and allow them, like me, to have a second chance at life.

**Leadership Abilities**

I believe being selected for a Ward Family in Action Award is evidence of the leadership skills I already demonstrated as a sophomore in devising a detailed action plan for TRH. I also believe that what I have achieved in Ethiopia since May is evidence of my ability to gain local
people’s respect and serve as a leader. I have made good progress through Ethiopia’s bureaucracy and hope to have a formal charter of recognition for my organization by December.

**Part III: Plan for Intellectual Inquiry**

**A. Researching the nature, causes, and consequences of the problem**

Poverty and homelessness are complex, multidimensional challenges. Even in a wealthy country such as the USA we have not adequately addressed these issues. To gain a well-rounded understanding of the problem of homelessness in Ethiopia and how to alleviate poverty among that population in Addis Ababa, I have the following action plan:

- Begin to shift my research’s emphasis from ineffective aid to Africa and restrictions on women’s healthcare access in Ethiopia to studies of poverty alleviation efforts to decrease the prevalence of homelessness in African urban areas and especially in Addis Ababa.
- Contact successful Addis Ababa-based entrepreneurs that support difficult to employ women and determine their hiring and retention strategies. Interview Hailu Tessema, the founder of the global flat-bread producer and distributor, Mama Fresh [http://www.mama-fresh.com](http://www.mama-fresh.com), which employs 90 percent women including many previously unemployed, and some suffering from leprosy. Contact Bethlehem Alemu, who transformed an informal workshop into soleRebels [http://www.solerebels.com](http://www.solerebels.com), her successful footwear company which is multi-national and fair trade.
- Read social entrepreneurship and social business leaders’ works, including Nobel Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus’ *Banker to the Poor* (1999) and *Creating a World without Poverty* (2007), Bob Harris’ *The International Bank of Bob* (2013), Bornstein and Davis’ *Social Entrepreneurship: what Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2010), and others.
- Transform my current research: “A Needs-Based Assessment of Homeless Women and Children’s Health in Nifas Silk-Lafto, Addis Ababa,” into a spring 2016 SURF presentation and also share my results with Ethiopian professors, NGO-leaders, and government officials. My study is an assessment of the health services and resources available to homeless populations. It is important because there are no existing comprehensive studies of homeless people’s health needs in that part of Addis Ababa.
- Review my interview notes from over a dozen interviews with homeless women, several with governmental and non-governmental leaders, and notes from my ARG internship to see if there are things that I might want to incorporate into my NGO’s development plan.
- Improve my cultural competency through study of Geert Hofstede’s "five dimensions of culture" - regard for individuality, gender roles, ability to tolerate social change, hierarchy, and long-term planning. Hofstede is an internationally recognized expert in organizational culture, and cultural economics and management. Although I grew up in Addis Ababa, speak fluent Amharic, and understand local gender and age-based norms, my cultural competency could be improved through reading Hofstede’s works and Alemayehu Mekonnen’s *Culture Change in Ethiopia* (2013).
- Add Entrepreneurship as my third minor and take ENT classes such as: Creativity & the Doer/maker Mindset, Entrepreneurial Finance, Bringing the Venture to Life, Entrepreneurship for the Greater Good, and Start-up Implementation, and the MGT course, Innovation Dynamics.
- Gain additional training in entrepreneurship through attendance at Yale University’s Global Health & Innovation conference, April 16-17, 2016. It is the world's leading and
largest global health conference and the largest social entrepreneurship conference. It draws 2,200 global professionals and students (http://www.uniteforsight.org/conference/).

- Apply for SURE ‘16 to formally explore the role of entrepreneurship, social businesses, and NGOs in assisting the homeless in African cities including Addis Ababa.
- Share what I learn through presentations at the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) conference in March 2016 and at the American Public Health Association (APHA) conference in October/November 2016.
- Work with an Elon anthropologist, a native of Eritrea (a country once part of Ethiopia), on incorporating my NGO into his WT Ethiopia and Tanzania study abroad course. Elon students in the WT class could learn about homelessness in Addis Ababa by spending a half day or day observing and interacting with the women supported by TRH and learn about its programming. Elon students would also have the opportunity to intern at TRH, in a program modeled after Dalhousie University’s Canadian program in Ethiopia. Over time, Elon’s relationship with TRH (where I intend to be based full-time post-graduation) could grow from being part of Dr. Idris’ WT program and an internship opportunity, to become the basis of a three year Periclean Scholars class project. In short, I wish for my Ward Award-launched and Leadership Prize-enhanced NGO initiative to positively impact and engage Elon students (and alums) well beyond my graduation date.

B. Researching the ways leadership theories and examples inform solution implementation

I believe that leadership is service. I view myself as a servant-leader, someone who makes a difference through her service to others. The leaders and leadership theories that will most inform my work are those of social entrepreneurs and social businesses (Keohane 2013, Prabhu 1999, Yunus 1999, 2007, 2010). These approaches generate income and profit while simultaneously achieving a social good, such as poverty alleviation. Bangladesh’s Muhammad Yunus, who established the Grameen Bank in 1983, is a prime example of a leader whose approach will inform my own. Contrary to what was then the norm, Professor Yunus made small loans to poor individuals, especially women, who did not have access to credit, due to having no collateral (house, car, or other tangible asset) against which to borrow. He proved that impoverished, poorly-educated women are worth investing in and that they can be successful small business people if given financial support (even as little as the equivalent of $40). The success of the Grameen Bank demonstrated that a new approach to banking called microfinance could help to alleviate poverty and bring development.

It is important to note that although Dr. Yunus’s approach has created growth and improved conditions for the rural poor in many developing countries, that as with other forms of assistance, microfinance is not the answer everywhere and under all conditions. Approximately US $30 million in micro-loans has been granted to poor people globally through Bob Harris’ Kiva (www.Kiva.org) since its inception in 2005. The poor are able to meet Kiva’s interest rates, but some micro-finance organizations charge such high rates that their programs have failed to reduce poverty. No one model will fix global poverty. Solutions must be culturally-informed and relevant to be effective (Payne 2005).

My solution will be to create job opportunities for homeless women. They will participate in micro-enterprises such as learning how to sew leather bags, cotton garments, and create bamboo works that can be marketed. I will research and identify which handicraft items are most
likely to succeed in being marketed and find ways to partner with Addis Ababa organizations that work with artisans to strengthen each of our organizations (for example, TRH might assist ARG with tracking the success of those that complete their training program, something they do not currently do).

My proposed solution will be evidence-based. I have started researching similar transitional home programs for homeless women in other African countries. An organization very similar to what I am proposing with TRH is A Ban against Neglect (ABAN, http://www.aban.org) in Ghana which was co-founded in 2008 by a three undergraduates, one Ghanaian, one Elon, and one from UNC. ABAN began in Ghana’s capital of Accra, but moved to a rural location after some years, because the boyfriends of the homeless women being assisted through their transitional home were interfering with the women’s focus on their training and finances. ABAN sells handicrafts online created by the women they trained. There have been complications transporting products to the USA from Ghana, but ABAN’s model of international sales is one that TRH might also achieve within five years.

I have ARG, ABAN, and larger companies (Mama Fresh and soleRebels) on which to model a social entrepreneurship, craft-creating enterprise at TRH. I believe that the organizations and approaches identified above, along with my current and future coursework, will prepare me to effectively create and execute an innovative intervention to improve the lives of homeless women in Addis Ababa.

Part IV: Feasibility, Budget and Timeline

Feasibility

By utilizing my research findings, Addis Ababa University faculty, and other local connections to the Ethiopian people I plan to serve, the proposed project, which is a combination of ambition and feasibility, will be completed within the $10,000 budget and 1.5-year timeframe of the prize. Although I will not eradicate poverty and homelessness in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I will provide five homeless women at a time with a one-year transitional home and the skills to reduce their poverty through the addition of an entrepreneurial skill development program at TRH. I will use much of the spring and summer of 2016 to develop a greater depth of understanding of poverty alleviation and social business initiatives for the homeless. The summer of 2016 and my senior year will be the implementation and assessment phase of a pilot program. Assessment may reveal that 18 months or two years is a more suitable time frame for some of the women to transition to self-sufficiency, whereas others might only need one year.

To analyze my research and interview social entrepreneurs will have no cost other than transportation costs when traveling to Ethiopia and to and from the offices of these organizations. The conferences that I would like to attend or present at have varied cost for admission, airfare, and lodging. Yale University’s Global Health and Innovation conference’s estimated cost is $1,329. The Society for Adolescent Health & Medicine has an estimated cost of $1,226. The American Public Health Association conference has an estimated cost of $1,562. I will apply for a $500 Undergraduate Research Program travel grant and $200 from African and African-American Studies to defray these costs by $700.
Travel to Ethiopia over winter term has an estimated cost of $1,875. The eight books on social entrepreneurship cost less than $120. The aforementioned expenses of $6,112, less $700 in funds supplied by other programs will take approximately $5,412 of the total budget. This will leave around $4,588 to put toward my solution of creating income-generating activity at TRH. This amount gives me sufficient flexibility and feasibility because of the exchange rate. One US dollar is equivalent to 20 Ethiopian birr. Just to put it in perspective 5 US dollars might buy an American person a meal at a fast-food chain but in Ethiopia it can feed five people for a full day.

Although I do not know the exact form that the income generating activities will take, if they are similar to ABAN and ARG, it is likely that five sewing machines costing around $175 each and $100 of handicraft-creating materials per woman will be required. There would also be the cost of hiring one instructor in addition to the existing staff, a cost of approximately $200/month for six months until a resident woman or existing staff could take over that role. Depending on the skills being learned two instructors hired for three months each might be used. The sewing machines ($875), supplies ($500), instructor(s) ($1,200) and the construction of an outbuilding or shelter to serve as workspace ($2,013.08), brings the total start-up amount for an entrepreneurial program to $4,588.08. Sales of the items created will go towards the purchase of additional materials.

**Budget**

**Books**

**TOTAL BOOKS**

$119.57

**Conferences**

*Global Health and Innovation Conference at Yale University April 16-17, 2016*

Registration (Student Rate) $130
Networking Reception $55
3 Nights at the New Haven Hotel @ $149+$22.35tax/night $514.05
Food for two days $80
Travel from NC to CT (GSO or RDU to HVN); flights out of RDU are cheaper, but getting to RDU will cost more Best estimate for a roundtrip flight plus taxi is at least $480
Miscellaneous (taxi in CT, tips at hotel) $70

**Society for Adolescent Health & Medicine Conference, spring 2016**
Round Trip Flight from Greensboro to DC $280
Airport parking $50
Hotel ($225 plus $33.75 X 3 days) $776.25
Food $120
SUB-TOTAL $1,226.25

**The American Public Health Association conference, late Oct/early Nov, 2016**
Round Trip Flight from Greensboro to Chicago $380
Airport parking $50
Hotel ($189.00 plus $28.35 taxes X 3 days) $652.05
Food $120
Conference Registration (non-member student) $360
SUB-TOTAL $1,562.05

3 CONFERENCES TOTAL $4,117.35
Less anticipated URP & AAASE funds (-$700)

**Winter 2017 travel to Ethiopia**
Round Trip Flight from DC to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia $1500
Transportation $375
TOTAL TRAVEL $1,875

**Income-generating Activities at TRH**
Likely to include 5 Singer sewing machines at $175 $875
Likely to include $100 in materials for 5 women $500
Instructor(s) hired for three to six months at $200/month $1,200
Construction of an outbuilding or shelter to serve as a workshop $2,013.08
TOTAL INCOME-GENERATING $4,588.08

TOTAL $10,000

**Timeline**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Ward Award proposal and funds to establish TRH</td>
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<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>Readings in social entrepreneurship and social business; outfitting of TRH with beds, bedding, needed kitchen supplies and appliances, office furniture, computer, and printer</td>
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<td>Dec. 2015</td>
<td>Apply for SURE; completion NGO registration process for TRH</td>
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<td>January 2016</td>
<td>Meet with social business leaders: Hailu Tessema (Mama Fresh), Bethlehem Alemu (SoleRebels) and WT Ethiopia &amp; Tanzania study abroad students</td>
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<td>Feb-March 2016</td>
<td>Society for Adolescent Health &amp; Medicine (SAHM) (March 9-12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>Yale University conference (April 16-17), SURF presentation on A Needs-Based Assessment of Homeless Women &amp; Children’s Health</td>
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<td>Month</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-July 2016</td>
<td>Participate in SURE (explore entrepreneurship, social business &amp; NGO in assessing homeless in Addis Ababa)</td>
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<td>August 2016</td>
<td>Share research finding with Addis Ababa University, government officials, NGO leaders in Addis Ababa</td>
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<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Begin pilot program, adding an entrepreneurial skills development program to TRH</td>
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<td>Sept-Dec 2016</td>
<td>Receive feedback and make needed changes on the pilot project</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>Interview homeless women in Ethiopia for additional feedback on TRH over the Holiday break/Winter term</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Make changes to the proposed solution based on feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb- May 2017</td>
<td>Report results and finalize the project</td>
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**Part V: List of sources**


Moyo, D. *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better way for Africa*. Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 2010.


