

Dear Friends

**Happy New Ferenji Year.** 2008 looks set to be a very exciting year for community tourism in Ethiopia.

The Meket Community Tourism has taken another leap forward in terms of popularity and profitability. The CTEs (Community-run Tourism Enterprises) are now making even greater profits.

The Lalibela based Guiding Enterprise is also making enough income to pay its way and now boasts four trained guides.

This year TESFA will work with new communities to open more sites in North Wollo (see Page2) and most excitingly, TESFA is investigating new projects in other parts of Ethiopia. Look out for news on these in the coming Newsletters. Plans are being considered to work with Frankfurt Zoological Society in Gwassa Menz and Bale. TESFA plans to start work in Wof Washa during the course of this year.



Scarecrow at Mequat Mariam (Mark Chapman)

#### Mountain Biking in Meket

Two adventurous guests, Florence and Benoit broke new ground for TESFA and Meket, being our first guests to cycle through the Meket countryside. They arranged to borrow a bike from a friend in Addis (thanks Bruno) for Mulugetta, their guide, who managed to keep up .

*"Cycling in Ethiopia was a dream for us for more than ten years" says Florence & Benoit. Fulfilling the dream "has been a wonderful experience. The main difference from our others bike trips was the stops at the Meket community sites, very different from a classic campsite! The tracks were sometimes very stony and required good control of the bike, but after a few kms it became a gently rolling area. It was great fun every where, especially with the mules carrying the luggage. As the daily trips between community sites were quite short; it left us a lot of time to stop over the waterfalls; visit beautiful churches like below Wajela; spend time with the people gathered under the trees after Sunday mass speaking and drinking local beer; and to speak with young children along the way..."*



Florence cycles down to Wajela - courtesy of Florence & Benoit

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TESFA reaching New Heights

With funding from Save the Children UK TESFA has begun work on a 5th site: Batalay Selassie - high on the Meket escarpment at around 2,200 meters.

Meetings are continuing with stakeholders regarding starting work on **Abuna Yoseph**. A site for the base camp for the mountain has been identified and TESFA hopes to start work there early this year. The altitude here will be 3,500 meters!



Great Ethiopian Run

Eight community participants, two from each site, ran on 25th November (see table below). Esubalow, Yilma, Hanna, Million, Habtamu and Mark also ran. The community participants and Esubalow came in well ahead of Mark (57:30 - not bad for a *ferenge*) and the other TESFA staff (around 75 mins). Demise (bottom left in the above photo) ran in around 30 minutes. Considering the winning athlete's time was 29:07, this was very fast. TESFA will be encouraging Demise to run a trial somewhere soon.

Name	Age	Sex	Grade	CBT Site	
Demise Fentaw	19	M	4	Yedukulay	1 <sup>st</sup>
Addis Eskemeche	18	Fe	7	Yedukulay	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Mesgan Fentaye	21	M	4	Wajela	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Emebet Agaje	18	Fe	9	Wajela	1 <sup>st</sup>
Mikir Adane	18	M	9	Mequat	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Melish Lule	18	Fe	9	Mequat	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Fekadu Wedaynew	27	M	2	Aterow	4 <sup>th</sup>
Sisayneh Gelaw	19	Fe	1	Aterow	4 <sup>th</sup>

The community participants had a great trip, with visits to traditional restaurants, museums and Merkato, and on the way home the Blue Nile Falls.

Missed Timkat this year (20th January)?

Timkat is the most famous of Ethiopia's festivals. It celebrates the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River. The literal meaning of Timkat is Baptism, but it is often called 'Epiphany' (see Newsletter Vol2).

However, the Church calendar is full of big celebrations. Each of the major saints has a monthly day and annual (or bi-annual) days. These annual days normally see the Tabots paraded out and a day of celebration. For example **St. Gabriel** is celebrated on the 19th of each Ethiopian month, with special days in late December and late July most famously at Kulubi near Harar in the East. Other examples are:

- Sebareatsemu Giyorgis - 27th Jan**
- Asteryo Mariam - 30th Jan**
- Kidane Meheret - 24 February**
- Abo (Abuna Menfes Kidus) - 14th March**
- Medhane Alem - 5 April**

For more information see the TESFA calendar.



Funeral of a respected priest near Mequat Mariam (Mark Chapman)

Due to increasing demand the community tourism is getting booked up further in advance, and we are having to ask smaller groups to share their visit with others.



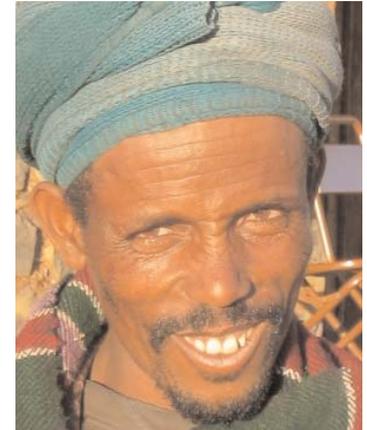
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Community Tourism making a real impact

TESFA has just conducted a series of impact assessments to see how the CbT income is benefitting individuals. One of the guards interviewed was Tesfaye Worku from Mequat Mariam, aged 42 with 4 children. As with most of the community he is illiterate.

"I have been a CbT guard for 3 years. I earn 50birr a month. With this income I have been able to purchase items for home consumption like grain and spices, along with clothes. Additionally I bought an ox. I also benefited at construction time, selling thatch for the roofs and wood, totally earning 60birr.

Before, I was poor, but now my situation has changed because I have two oxen instead of one. Before, each month we faced a shortage for home consumption, but now God bless, all has changed for our household. I hope that in the future me and other members [of the community] will see a big change at the household level."



Tesfaye (by Bernedetta)

Summary of bookings & community incomes from Jul 06 - Dec 07

Period / Quarter	tl guest	nights	guest nights	Total Fee	25% CTGE	15% TSU	No Grps	Av Group size	Mequat		Wajela		Aterow		Yadukulay	
									Gst	Fee	Gst	Fee	Gst	Fee	Gst	Fee
Total for Q3 06	No bookings (Krempt)														Not Operational	
Total for Q4 06	63	58	151	39,960	9,225	5,535	19	3.32	48	7,680	53	8,880	45	7,140		
Total for Q1 07	66	63	137	41,700	10,425	6,255	20	3.30	63	10,980	59	10,530	19	3,420		
Total for Q2 07	72	86	174	51,280	12,450	7,470	28	2.57	62	11,160	64	11,220	49	8,020	5	900
Total for Q3 07	16	12	34	8,800	1,950	1,170	5	3.20	8	1,440	8	1,440	16	2,240	2	360
Total for Q4 07	202	229	552	149,650	36,363	21,818	50	4.04	148	24,840	163	26,820	141	23,070	59	8,760
<b>Total for 2007</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>251,430</b>	<b>61,188</b>	<b>36,713</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>48,420</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>50,010</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>36,750</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>10,020</b>

Bookings & income for year ending Dec 07

From the above table it is clear that the demand for the Meket Community Tourism is increasing fast. 552 guest nights in the last 3 months of 2007 is more than 3 times the number of guest nights in the 2nd quarter of 2007. In line with this increase incomes at all levels have increased, and each community is making more money than ever before.

This highlights the urgent need to develop more sites and spread community-based tourism to other parts of Ethiopia.



Mark & Mequat Mariam Team (courtesy of Kelley & British Council)

Books & Publications:

**Perspectives Ethiopia & Britain** a beautifully illustrated book produced by the British Council & the British Embassy has some lovely pictures of Meket (see above), and is a fascinating book of images and people in both Britain and Ethiopia. (It costs 200 birr & can be purchased from the British Council telephone + 251 11 1550022 - or email Meron.Solomon@et.britishcouncil.org )

A few copies of TESFA's Millennium Calendar are still available ... just contact Hanna at TESFA.



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**The Rock Hyrax** (*Procavia capensis*) is part of an ancient family that includes the Tree and Bush Hyrax and is found only in Africa and Arabia. This unusual animal is widespread on the cliffs of Meket. Bizarrely the



Hyrax is related to elephants, armadillos and sea cows, not rodents such as rabbits and mice. Fossils indicate that in Egypt some 36 million years ago hyraxes were the most important medium-sized grazing and browsing ungulates in Africa. They ranged in size from that of rabbit to that of a hippopotamus. Around 25 million years ago bovids (hoofed, hollow-horned ruminants such as cattle, sheep, antelopes and gazelles) began to spread and the numbers of hyrax were greatly reduced, ultimately restricted to living among rocks and in trees habitats that were not invaded by bovids.

Hyraxes have a poor ability to regulate their body temperature and a low metabolic rate for their body size. Body temperature is mainly maintained by gregarious huddling, long periods of inactivity, and basking. They are dependent on shelters (boulders and tree cavities) that provide relatively constant temperature and humidity. Their physiology allows them to exist in very dry areas and use food of relatively poor quality.

**Gwassa Menz** is a high afro-alpine grassland in North Shoa, some 265km North East from Addis. It is the most important refuge of the Ethiopian Wolf (pictured below in Menz) in Ethiopia outside of the Bale Mountains.



Mark recently attended the opening of a guest house by Frankfurt Zoological Society with his young children and described it as “exceptionally beautiful”.

***We at TESFA, and the communities we work with, wish to thank our donors for their invaluable support over the last year: Irish Aid, Save the Children UK, British Embassy, German Embassy, Tresillian Trust, Responsibletravel.com and a number of private individuals.***



Farmers harvesting hay in Meket (Mark Chapman).

**What the Meket guests are saying about their experience with the communities:**

*Martha & Debby said ...”we wanted to thank you for such a wonderful trek in November. It really was the highlight of our holiday, everyone looked after us so well and we saw the most beautiful views of our lives.” Dec 07*

*Nancy Chuang describes her Meket Trek as.... “one of the best experiences of my life! ... It was uplifting and inspiring, and I’m so excited to watch it grow further. From the hilarity of driving that awful road from Gondar to Filakit, to the beautiful children, wonderful campsites and gorgeous views of the trek, ending with fond farewells for Mulugeta Sisay and the driver Habtamu in Lalibela, it was just an incredibly warm and pleasant experience throughout.” Jan 08*

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