



VULNERABLE CHILDREN SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting Minutes

Meeting Title	:	Directors Meeting
Date	:	Thursday May 31, 2012
Time	:	9am Pacific time, noon Toronto time, 1pm Atlantic, and 7pm in Ethiopia (2:00 Ethiopian time!)
Place	:	Skype
Chair Person	:	Arnica Rowan
Invitee List	:	<p>Internal: Arnica Rowan, Chris Ardern, Dacia Douhaibi, Menbere Muluneh, Nicole Bellefleur, Pam Carlson, Tawnya Pattie, Birhan Alem</p> <p>External:</p>
In Attendance	:	<p>Internal: Arnica Rowan, Chris Ardern, Dacia Douhaibi, Nicole Bellefleur, Tawnya Pattie</p> <p>External:</p>
Absent	:	<p>Internal: Menbere Muluneh, Pam Carlson, Birhan Alem</p> <p>External:</p>
Agenda	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of each other • Welcome to Birhan • Quick stuff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitors to Ethiopia (Nicole) ○ Updates (Arnica) ○ Birhan's role Arnica / Birhan) • More in depth stuff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charitable requirements of partners (Tawnya) ○ Visit to Ethiopia (Arnica and Tawnya) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gindo: Canadian Humanitarian project (Tawnya) ▪ House to House kids ▪ Faya Orphanage ▪ Fundraiser / Finances ▪ Subsequent Trips • Decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changing Faya Child sponsorships to Faya Orphanage sponsorships ○ Canadian Humanitarian proposal
Minutes Submitted By	:	Arnica Rowan
Minutes Submitted On	:	July 17, 2012

Next Meeting	:	Date: September 2012
		Time:
		Place:
		Chair: Arnica Rowan

#	Discussion Items
1.	<p>Visitors to Ethiopia</p> <p>Nicole reported that there were two families she knew of who were traveling soon to Ethiopia. One of the families was knitting teddy bears to take to each child at Faya Orphanage.</p> <p>Nicole mentioned that since adoptive families are now visiting their children’s orphanages, there is less interest in visiting additional orphanages, such as Faya. That said, she has found that there is a high awareness of Faya Orphanage and Vulnerable Children Society amongst adoptive parents, so our word is definitely out there.</p>
2.	<p>Updates to sponsors</p> <p>We consulted our donors about the Faya Child sponsorship program (on our website, Facebook group, with a poll and in person) and the update challenges with children coming and going from the orphanage. The reality is that Faya Orphanage is more of a group home, and does not exist for adoption; rather, as a temporary home for children whose guardians cannot care for them. The orphanage also offers free daycare and even illness respite for guardians. We discussed that we need to communicate this better with our public, now that we understand it better ourselves.</p> <p><i>DECISION:</i> To convert “Faya Child” sponsorships to “Faya Orphanage” sponsorship. We will profile one orphanage resident child each update session and send the same profile to all sponsors, along with a general report on the orphanage, such as how many children are living there, and some general pictures.</p>
3.	<p>Our new staff member</p> <p>The board is pleased that we have now hired Birhan to help us with updates and partner organization communication. We hope that his presence in Ethiopia will ensure better and more complete updates for sponsors. Tawnya and Arnica described his personality and actions while in Ethiopia, and all the board agreed that he is a good fit.</p> <p>We agreed that we must be clear about his responsibilities in our newsletters and with partners, so that there is cooperation but also so that he is not taxed with</p>

	<p>duties beyond what we have included in his contract.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Charities Directorate requirements of partner organizations</p> <p>With our charitable status, we now have very specific requirements from the Charities Directorate of Revenue Canada for our partner organizations.</p> <p>Tawnya said that she and Meseret had agreed to the following measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Faya Orphanage’s last year’s financial statements be translated and sent to Amica/Tawnya for review; 2. That the monthly Faya Orphanage expenditures covered by Vulnerable Children’s monthly contribution be highlighted or separated out into a separate statement so we know exactly where the money is going each month; and 3. That there is a separate Faya Orphanage account created to hold Vulnerable Children Society’s funds before expenditure. <p><i>Decision:</i> the board approved of the above conditions and agreed that there will be no funding increase until all the conditions are met on a regular monthly basis.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Faya Orphanage’s funding sources</p> <p>In Ethiopia, Tawnya sat down with Meseret and went through one month of expenses for Faya Orphanage. The expenses for that particular month were approximately 55,000 birr. Faya currently receives 27,000 birr from Vulnerable Children for the administration of the orphanage and the House 2 House administration. Each month we also send a varying amount (approximately 17,000 birr at present) for distribution to House 2 House families.) We do not know how Faya Orphanage is managing to pay the bills with the discrepancy between income and expenses, as their funding from the Norwegian adoption agency has dwindled from 21,000 down to 7,000 birr per month.</p> <p><i>Decision:</i> The board discussed if we should try to increase the core funding for the orphanage or not. In conclusion, we decided that Amica should seek further clarification from Meseret and Sintayehu, and that no additional monies would be considered until a regular financial reporting system was in place (as outlined above.)</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Education Centre in Gindo</p> <p>Tawnya reported on the Canadian Humanitarian project in Gindo that we are supporting. She enjoyed her visit and learned much more about how comprehensive the project is. She was most impressed with the Foresight Fathers</p>

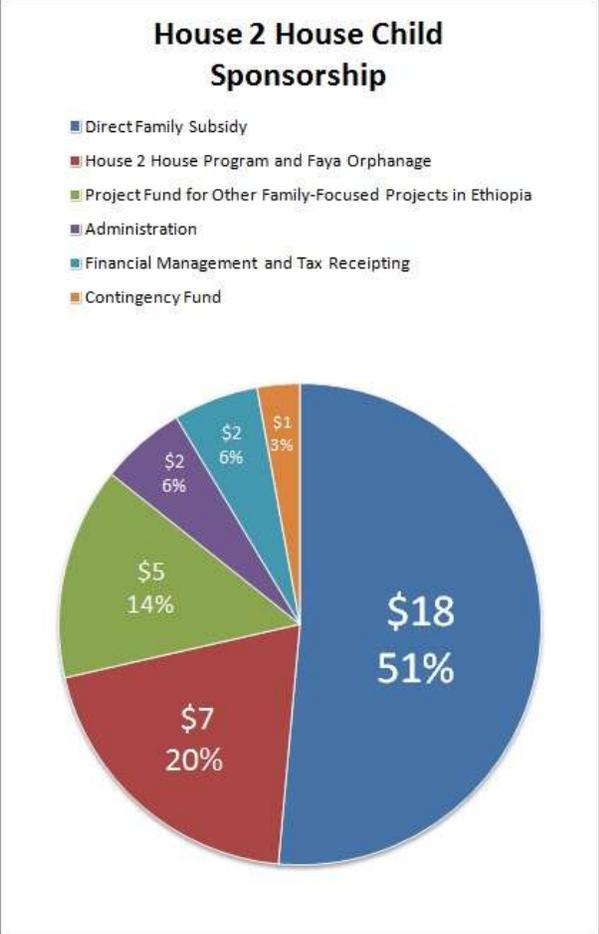
	<p>program, which is a mens club that is creating change through volunteerism in the community. The garden is also a wonderful project where 1/3 of the crops are given to the families, 1/3 for income generation and 1/3 for the centre to feed the vulnerable children it serves. Tawnya’s more comprehensive report is on the website, and our \$10,000 check is being sent off promptly.</p>
7.	<p>Ekob – our emerging microfinance program</p> <p>While Tawnya, Arnica and Rita were in Ethiopia last month, we were approached by a group of women who have a lending circle and were asking if we would infuse capital into their “ekob” so they could make some lasting change in their lives. Ekobs are a traditional practice in Ethiopia that is infused into the culture; Ethiopian Canadians also belong to ekobs. Basically, every member contributes a small amount, and when the member has a special occasion, emergency or extraordinary need, they can borrow from the ekob.</p> <p>Dacia interviewed several organizations and did a literature search to find the best practices for microfinancing, since we were approached Sunrise Ekob in Ethiopia last month. Some of the best cases she found were Ethiopian because of the fit between microfinance and ekobs (traditional lending circles.) Her findings were nicely summarized. Here are the necessary ingredients for a successful microfinance program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The smaller the group the better• Leadership for the group need to be at the local level• There should be bookkeeping training for the group’s local leadership team• Groups function best with a priority focus, such as women, or single mothers. <p>There was significant discussion around what our role would be, and how we would fit into this traditional model and still meet our expectations for accountability.</p> <p><i>DECISION:</i> Our Ekob micro-finance program should include the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training for the local leaders• Accountability and reporting to VCS, including the number and amount of loans per 6 months.• Profile and picture of one entrepreneur per 6 month period to profile to donors <p>We discussed who might be the donors for this program, and how we might solicit funding for this program. Paramount is not cannibalizing our House 2 House</p>

program from the same target market. Business people helping entrepreneurs might be one approach. There was also discussion of a large donor kick-starting the program.

TASK: At the end of the discussion, Dacia and Nicole were tasked with writing up a one-page program description including the program goals,, roles of each side, our interactions, responsibilities, etc. Our first test group would be the Sunrise ekob.

8. Distribution of House 2 House Community sponsorship dollars

There was a discussion among board members about how much of the \$35 House 2 House sponsorship reaches donors, how much is sent to Ethiopia, and how much is admin. Some of the board members were apprised of the distribution and others were surprised. The financial statements have been online and each individual fund has been previously discussed by the board and logged into the board minutes (for example, the decrease in contingency funding once we reached a \$3000 contingency fund.)



The distribution of the funds for a \$35/month House 2 House sponsorship (as per June 2012 exchange rates and current funding allocations) is as follows:

What we are not sure of is exactly how much the families in Adama are getting (they are not in a program and their sponsorships precede the formation of Vulnerable Children Society) or the higher amount sponsorships in Wonji.

Task: Chris was tasked with asking this of Sintayehu when she was in Ethiopia next month, as well as Arnica was going to ask by email.

9. General House 2 House discussion

The board discussed how we see the House 2 House program making an impact on

	<p>families, but how a cash subsidy is not an ideal long-term strategy. We discussed the possibilities of graduating families out of the House 2 House program by offering other services (such as gardening, microfinancing) so they could become more self-sufficient. We also discussed that some of the guardians are so ill that self-sustainability may not be possible, even with additional programs. We concluded that we would like to beef up the House 2 House program with additional family supports within the next year.</p>
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#	Decisions
1.	To convert “Faya Child” sponsorships to “Faya Orphanage” sponsorship. We will profile one orphanage resident child each update session and send the same profile to all sponsors, along with a general report on the orphanage, such as how many children are living there, and some general pictures.
2.	<p>The board approved of the conditions below and agreed that there will be no funding increase until all the conditions are met on a regular monthly basis.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Faya Orphanage’s last year’s financial statements be translated and sent to Amica/Tawnya for review; 2. That the monthly Faya Orphanage expenditures covered by Vulnerable Children’s monthly contribution be highlighted or separated out into a separate statement so we know exactly where the money is going each month; and 3. That there is a separate Faya Orphanage account created to hold Vulnerable Children Society’s funds before expenditure.
3.	The board discussed if we should try to increase the core funding for the orphanage or not. In conclusion, we decided that Amica should seek further clarification from Meseret and Sintayehu, and that no additional monies would be considered until a regular financial reporting system was in place (as outlined above.)
4.	<p>Our Ekob micro-finance program should include the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for the local leaders • Accountability and reporting to VCS, including the number and amount of loans per 6 months. • Profile and picture of one entrepreneur per 6 month period to profile to donors

Action Items					
#	Action Item	Owner	Status	Due Date	Comments
1.	Dacia and Nicole were tasked with writing up a one-page program description including the program goals,, roles of each side, our interactions, responsibilities, etc. Our first test group would be the Sunrise ekob.	Dacia Nicole			
2.	Chris was tasked with asking the amounts the irregular grandfatherd sponsorships of Sintayehu when she was in Ethiopia next month, as well as Arnica was going to ask by email.	Chris and Arnica	In progress		

#	Carry-Over Items for Next Meeting
1.	Proposal from Canadian Humanitarian
2.	Ekob Program Launch
3.	Core Funding amounts for Faya Orphanage