Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Gonder, Lalibela, Axum & Bahir Dar

Ethiopia is located in the horn of East Africa. Its land mass is nearly twice the size of the state of Texas with a population of about 90 million. There are more than 70 different ethnic groups with Oromo, Amhara and Tigray being the largest. The most commonly spoken languages include Amarigna (Amharic) (official), Oromigna, Tigrigna, Somaligna, Guaragigna, Sidamigna, and Hadiyigna. Amharic is written using a script that originated with the Ge’ez language called the Fidel, which follows:

Global Special Studies Project

The purpose of my project was to gather information regarding the usage of traditional medicine in Ethiopia and to explore the implications for future interventions to manage and prevent disease.

Community Partners

• Gracious community members in Addis Ababa
• University of Addis Ababa School of Social Work
• Dr. Afework Kassu
• Department of Microbiology and Parasitology, Gondar College of Medicine and Health Sciences

Dr. Kassu has conducted research and authored several articles regarding traditional medicine and health needs in Ethiopia.

Skills Utilized

• Identified some sources of political, social and economic inequalities
• Examined how people inspire social and community change
• Engaged in personal self-reflection, self-awareness and self-correction

Outcomes

Traditional medicine is practiced mostly in the countryside by those with limited resources.

There are concerns and/or fears surrounding inconsistent dosages of herbal remedies.

Traditional remedies for mild afflictions (i.e. common cold) are used by both urban and rural populations.

Ethiopian researchers are cataloging and testing herbal usage, dosage and effectiveness.

The documentation of medicinal plants is becoming increasingly urgent due to loss of natural habitat.

Unexpected Shift in Focus

• Drought and Water Security
• Hunger and Food Security
• Irrigation and Farming
• Economic Development
• Political Systems and Systematic Oppression

Lessons Learned

• The more I learn, the less I know
• Things are usually not what they seem on the surface
• Policy and Economics are at the root of most human rights issues
• Social change abroad is very different from in USA
• The privilege and economic opportunity in America is unsurpassed

History and Culture

Ethiopians resisted two attempts at Italian colonization in 1896 and again in 1941 after a 5 year occupation. Ethiopians have a strong sense of culture and pride as a result of this unprecedented feat. Northern Ethiopia is home to national treasures that are ancient, mysterious and steeped in spirituality and tradition. They are a source of great pride.

Spirituality and national heritage are present in many aspects of Ethiopian culture. It is a collective society that values sharing and respect, especially for elders.

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