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AFRICAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE

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Hurricane Sandy Update

We would like to thank everyone who reached out in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy to make sure that our offices and staff were safe and unharmed. We were extremely fortunate, as our staff were all safe and accounted for and our offices emerged unscathed.

We are currently assisting clients who were affected, and the African community is doing what they can to raise funds and supplies for those that were not so fortunate. To find out more about the African community's response to Hurricane Sandy, [click here](#).

Additionally, the New York Mayor's Office has released various volunteer and donation opportunities. [Click here](#) to view the most recent document of opportunities, or visit the [NYC Mayor's Office website](#) for up-to-date information.

New York, as it always does, will emerge stronger as we all band together and support one another during the recovery.

ASC Ethiopia Needs Your Help



Friends,

Ten years after Asfaha Hadera took African Services programs back to Ethiopia, ASC operates 5 HIV/TB free community clinics in different regions of the country. What they all have in common is their situation in market areas, where the poorest of the poor congregate. African Services quickly learned that this is where the homeless, displaced, beggars, the disabled, mentally ill, street children,

A mother poses with her two children, now healthy thanks to their enrollment in our pediatric HIV program.

sex workers, and others most vulnerable could be reached. Add to this that Ethiopia is 5th from the

bottom on the World Bank's poverty index, of 213 countries ranked, and you can see how poor are those served by ASC clinics.

If you know Asfaha, you know he is no Mother Teresa, but he is a man on a mission. While parts of Ethiopia may look like Calcutta/Kolkata, Ethiopia operates under a different political framework, one in which you had better be tough and argumentative to break through government resistance to recognizing the role of Ethiopian community organizations in development.

Asfaha has had to overcome opposition to African Services' work, which provided the first free HIV testing in the country - when government was still charging a fee for service. African Services provides lab services that process specimens for government hospitals when their equipment malfunctions. African Services gives nutrition support services, pediatric and prenatal vitamins and de-worming pills, and new shoes to over 8,000 children per year, so that they can ably make their way to school and work. African Services offers HIV, STD, and TB treatment, treatment for prevention of HIV-related opportunistic infections, contraceptives, and condoms. African Services, as an indigenous Ethiopian organization, has created a true community-based network of health services, which is expected to become self-sustaining within the next 5 years, as the micro-insurance industry in Ethiopia begins to take root. Imagine operating a clinic in the US without private or government health insurance coverage availability. It's simply not possible to do without grant funding or donations. However, this will change as more people are able to purchase affordable health insurance, and those who can pay will help us to subsidize free services to the very poor who cannot.

Further, ASC has built an apiary in Tigray, in its first year, which is expected to scale up over 5 years to become export-capable. Look out for that creamy white Tigray honey- it's on its way. African Services clinics will be further subsidized with these revenues.

But at this moment, African Services Ethiopia is on the verge of having to close 3 of its clinics, due to budget cuts at the international funding level. What this means is: 1,200 families will no longer have access to HIV or TB treatment, reproductive health or nutritional support.

Please help us save African Services Ethiopia clinics. Go to <http://www.africanservices.org/index.php/Donate/ASC-Ethiopia>

Sincerely,

News and Activities

Client Story: A Future Filled with Joy



Claire & Joy pose for a photo as they celebrate Joy's asylum application approval.

She no longer answers to Rawdah, a name given to her at birth. She now answers to the name "Joy," a name that she thinks embodies her future. "Your name is given to you by people who love you, and no one loved me when they gave me my name," says Joy. Her first act as a free woman was to erase the past and move forward. As of September, and thanks to African Services' staff attorney, Claire Thomas, Joy has been granted asylum and can begin establishing a new and happier life for herself in the U.S.

She came to African Services in April to take ESL classes, and also began working with ASC immigration attorney, Claire Thomas, to apply for asylum. "Joy's case is an extreme example of how a person can feel compelled to abandon her country

and everything that is familiar in order to find dignity and basic safety," shared ASC attorney Claire Thomas. With help from African Services, Joy has now gained that freedom.

Although Joy's future looks bright, she had to first conquer her past. Growing up in Sana'a, Yemen, Joy experienced a tumultuous childhood upbringing. Her father was Christian, and thus ostracized by her mother's parents. Joy grew up without basic freedoms and constant in fear of her extended family.

Her family kept her from school most of her childhood. Her uncles even forbid her from attending a local English program because it was co-ed. However, Joy acquired English CD-Rom discs and managed to teach herself the language. She also purchased bootleg copies of computer design programs and learned to use them in secret. Joy learned to create designs using these programs and began a career in interior design. A friend asked her to work at a local design company. Despite having to work from home in secret, and stealthily pass along her work to the company, Joy flourished. Joy kept her earnings a secret from her uncles and used this extra cash to sustain herself and her sister. Unfortunately, when war broke out in Yemen in 2011, the company was forced to shut down and Joy's only opportunity for self-sufficiency disappeared.

The family fled to Cairo in 2011 due to the outbreak of violence in Yemen. Joy hoped that she would find an opportunity to run away from her family, but she discovered that here too there were no opportunities for women living alone or without their husbands. It was this experience that convinced Joy that she needed to move further away to find freedom.

After the war, the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a reopened and Joy quickly applied for a student visa to attend a school in Cleveland to study English. In March 2012 Joy received her visa and purchased a ticket to fly to New York. This entire process was completed in secret and posed great risk to Joy and her sister-who helped her. Had her family known, she would have been punished severely.

On her flight to New York, Joy discussed her position with a fellow passenger who explained that Joy had only paid for a month of school in Cleveland and that her student visa would not allow her to work and support herself. Joy immediately had to change course and find a new place to live. When she arrived in New York, Joy temporarily lived with a woman in Harlem who was also from West Africa and directed her to African Services for ESL classes.



Joy poses with her ESL teacher, Syd Dennison, and her classmates.

At her classes, the teacher asked Joy about her history and suggested that she speak with a lawyer at African Services about her immigration status. Joy needed to revise her status since she was not attending the school stipulated in her student visa.

It was then that Joy met Claire Thomas, an attorney at African Services. Claire helped Joy get in touch with a counselor, Johanna, at Turning Point in Queens to assist her in dealing with the traumas from her past. "I saw my counselor weekly for counseling" says Joy of her time at Turning Point. "She suggested I join a support group, but I am not ready to talk to other people about my problems yet. I have spent so much of my life alone, inside the house, so it is difficult for me to open up to lots of people."

Johanna also helped Joy find a more stable place to live. "Life became very difficult with the woman I was renting a room from," says Joy, "She wanted me to wash the stairs and do other chores... I did not run away to be a housemaid." Johanna suggested that Joy move to a shelter for Muslim women in Queens. While the shelter keeps strict hours and rules, Joy finds them easy to follow. "The first night I slept there was the first time I put my head on my bed without thinking about tomorrow. In my country, I was always afraid."

While Joy is looking forward to her new life in the U.S., she deeply regrets leaving her sister behind. "I feel so much guilt that I have left my sister behind in Yemen." Joy knows that she can never return home. There is nowhere for a single woman to live besides with her family. "I am so afraid of my family- I know they will kill me should I return," says Joy, "They will destroy me because of the shame I have brought on the family by running away."

Fortunately, Joy has been granted asylum and never need return to her life of confinement. Joy has decided to pursue a career in interior design and looks forward to supporting herself so that she can live on her own.

With the help of African Services legal team, Joy has finally been able to find a new country, and a new home.

When speaking of her client, Ms. Thomas said, "I am in awe of Joy's strength and courage. One

of the first things she said to me the first time we met was, 'I was born in the wrong country.' She left everything she knew and traveled by herself for the very first time to come to the U.S. Everything is new for her and she is taking it all in stride. Her future is looking very bright."

--Ari Jones

World Food Day Celebration - October 24th



On October 24, African Services staff and clients enjoyed the celebration of International Food Day. Food Day, organized by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, promotes a movement towards sustainable and affordable food and annually hosts Food Day on October 24 to celebrate and enhance their message. As an avid supporter of sustainable, healthy food African Services Committee hosted a Food Day event.

Organized by Melissa Ip, ASC's Community Nutrition Educator and Ndeye Gueye's the Food Pantry Coordinator, the goal of the day was to bring the staff together to create and prepare food that focused on healthy, nutritional meals. Preparing delicious food that included chicken, fish, whole grains, vegetables and a dessert, Ndeye Gueye who prepared the meal wanted to show staff how the items in ASC's food pantry could be used to create a healthy meal.



Joining the staff of ASC were several pre-med interns who gave staff members a workshop of dietary guidelines as suggested by the USDA.org and information about the importance of purchasing seasonal produce.

Supported by the City Confederacy Grant and several public and private donations the ASC's Food Pantry has over several years progressively been able to create a sustainable supply of food in the pantry to ensure that they can always give families and individuals in need a shopping bag that enables to have a source of food.

Together Melissa Ip is working hard with Ndeye Gueye, ASC's Food Pantry Coordinator, to ensure that they 'create a healthier food environment for staff' and the community for Harlem and a decent supply of food items with ASC's food pantry.

ASC Heads to Sao Paulo for International Human Rights Conference



Bakary Tandia, ASC case manager and community advocate, poses in front of the conference center.

The International Human Rights Conference took place on October 13-20, 2012 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. It brought together about 100 participants, including human rights activists and scholars and members of civil society from 39 countries. The purpose of this annual conference is to give a venue to human rights activists from the global south to discuss the challenges they face, and to creatively design strategies to effectively address such challenges. It was an unparalleled opportunity for activists to network among themselves and to share their experiences. More importantly, it gives the opportunity to emerging leaders in the field of human rights to hone their skills by interacting with well

experienced human rights activists and leading human rights scholars.

Besides the presence of highly respected human rights activists, the profile of the conference was elevated by contributions from by internationally renown figures such as Mr. Paulo Vannuchi, former Minister of Human Rights of Brazil. He was a political prisoner during the dictatorship years of the country. Mr. Gareth Evans, former Foreign Minister of Australia was invited as a panelist. He is the co-author of the UN Responsibility to Protect Concept (R2P). In addition, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was represented by Glivania Maria de Oliveira. She talked about the concept of Responsibility While Protecting (RWP) developed by the Brazilian government. In the context of the two concepts, the military intervention in Libya and the unfolding tragedy in Syria were widely discussed. It is also worth mentioning the presence of Rai Oliveira, member of the Brazilian soccer team which won the Soccer World Cup in 1994. He has become a leading figure for social change in Brazil. Through the two organizations he has founded—the Athletes for Active Citizenship Association and the Gol de Letra Foundation—he is providing assistance to disadvantaged youth.



Bakary poses with Rai Oliveira, Brazilian national soccer team star.

The topics of the conference were as diverse as they were interesting. They included an interesting and prescient discussion of the issue of transitional justice. Participants heard the experiences of Brazil and Argentina. Mr. Vannuchi talked about the years of dictatorship in Brazil. He described efforts being deployed to put in place a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate the crimes that had been committed under the dictatorial regime of Brazil. He put emphasis on the role of justice in the healing process. In this regard Mr. Vannuchi

pointed out that, "as the former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said, 'only washed wounds will heal.'" Another topic discussed were the limits of the international community and the use of force. Mr. Evans talked about the UN Responsibility to Protect Concept. He raised its limits and appreciated the contribution made by the government of Brazil by introducing the Responsibility While Protecting. The debate on economic development and human rights violations, focused on human rights violations committed by corporations. The discussion on Institutional Development and Technology and human rights gave the opportunity to human rights activists to share their experiences as to how to strengthen their organizations and promote their agenda by using new technologies.



Although the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) Law School was the central location of the conference, some events took place at places of historical importance. The opening ceremony took place at Casa das Caldeiras, an old industrial plant built in the 1920s, which has become a museum. The debate on transitional justice was held at the Resistance Memorial, a detention center during the dictatorship years of Brazil, and the debate on the World Cup and Olympic Games was hosted at Livraria Cultura Auditorium. The discussion focused on the impact of the World Cup and the Olympic Games on the populations. In her presentation, human rights activist Claudia Favaro sharply criticized the eviction of the 170,000 people as the result of the hosting of the World Cup and Olympic Games in Brazil in 2014. Furthermore, she strongly denounced the violations of the fundamental rights of the evictees. Her concerns were echoed by Professor Rick Bond of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban South Africa. He highlighted the impact of the 2010 World Cup by sharing the stories of the 20,000 people who had been displaced due to activities and events surrounding the hosting of the 2010 World Cup. Holding events at various locations provided participants with the chance to learn about the history of the city and the country, and what each of these institutions represents.

Overall the conference was highly interactive. Participants had the opportunity to share the perspectives of human rights in their respective countries. The Samba music and dance embellished the event during the opening and closing ceremonies. Participants left Sao Paula highly reenergized with a renewed commitment to promoting human rights.

The conference was generously sponsored by the [Conectas Human Rights](#). Its mission is to promote the realization of human rights and consolidation of the Rule of Law in the Global South - Africa, Asia and Latin America.

-Bakary Tandia

Save the Date: African Services Holiday Party!

It's Time to Celebrate! Fête de fin d'année!

It's that time of year again...it's the annual **African Services Holiday Party!** Join us to celebrate the successes of 2012!

When: Friday, December 14th, 6-10 pm



What: African food, music, drinks, dancing & good cheer

Where: African Services Committee, 429 West 127th Street (b/w Convent & Amsterdam)

****Voluntary \$10 donation at the door. Festive dress!****

Fun in the City

Stephanie Kaplan, Communications Director recommends...



"Seeds of Resiliency" Film Screening

What: This new documentary by filmmaker Susan Polis Schutz, helps us to understand that our darkest moments can contain a shining light. The

film introduces us to twelve diverse people who have survived tragedies and challenges by having great hope and helping others.

Where: Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011

When: November 23 - November 29, 2012, **Showtimes:** 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:00pm



"Seeds of Resiliency" Trailer

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