



## **BACKGROUND**

Operation Rescue is a child care project which was founded by two missionaries in Mekelle in the northern province of Tigray in Ethiopia in 2000 and now has three centres in that country as well as a centre in Brazil and another about to be opened in India. Their approach has been that when a new centre in a country is set up they have placed an indigenous person in leadership and withdrawn while still retaining an overall supervisory role through their own visitations and the supervision of a Board of Trustees in Switzerland.

The project was founded in 2000 in Ethiopia by missionaries Marciano and Christina Teixeira. In 1997 they arrived in Mekelle and alongside working with local churches, Marciano worked in a hostel for boys. Children came to their kitchen window at home; they were taken in, showered and given clothes. More and more children came and volunteers from one of the churches became involved, including Getachew Tesfay the current manager, who gave up his job and began working with Marciano and Christina, living by faith. Believing this was what God called them to do, they sought and were granted registration as a project by the government. One day a group of missionaries were praying with Marciano and Christina and one person prayed 'May this couple serve as a rescue for children here in Ethiopia' and that is how the project got its name.

The vision was for a community based care project and the team started visiting families with names given by the Department of Social Affairs and contacting children on the streets. They began with 20 orphans in a room in the hostel but soon moved to rented premises where 80 children came for half a day (the other half day they were enrolled in school) to have a meal and enjoy activities.

As time went on 80 children grew to 200. The project was in good standing with the government and when the proposal was first put to them the government was asked for land to build a centre. A site was found and after all the paperwork was completed a site of 15,000 square metres was theirs. In 2004 Marciano and Christina left Mekelle leaving the project in the hands of Getachew Tesfay and some months later, totally unexpectedly, they were given 40,000 dollars from an American lady who had visited the project, enabling them to start building their own centre on the site. Currently over 300 children are catered for on this site. In 2010 a second centre was opened in Adigrat, now catering for 60 children and in 2013 a third centre in Adwa for 100 children, using the same community based model of care.



## **Present Ministry**

The project targets poor vulnerable children in the community and, in particular, HIV/Aids orphans and abandoned and destitute street children.

Wherever the centres are based, the vision is to see these vulnerable children cared for and empowered through an approach that is community based and is holistic in that it provides for the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development of the children seeking to enable them to achieve their maximum potential and thus demonstrating the love of God to the poor and destitute.

Operation Rescue centres in Ethiopia, where more than 400 children are cared for, are neither orphanages or schools but community based centres where children come for half of each day [before or after their half day at school] and receive the benefit of many services. These include a main meal, health care, educational support through tutorial classes and access to library and computer facilities as well as provision of school uniforms and school materials. Each child has a social worker from the project who visits the family each month and assesses whether additional support is required. Currently in each of the three Ethiopian centres in Mekelle, Adwa and Adigrat, there are families receiving special support which can take the form of help with rent, access to hospital treatment or medicines or provision of food. Each 'session' at the centres begins with 'Devotions' when the children are taught from the Bible and given guidance on moral and ethical issues so that they can make responsible life choices.

In Ethiopia, the staff at the centres work closely with the local authorities who refer children for inclusion in the project. Operation Rescue is held in high esteem by those local authorities and in November 2016 was given a certificate as recognition of their contribution to the Tigray Regional Plan and given an award for being the 'best performer' out of the charity organisations represented.

Most of the children in the project live with members of extended family or neighbours if parents are not alive but in the case of a small number of children with no one to support them there are small residential units where the children live as brothers and sisters with a house mother in charge.

The project also caters for c 60 blind students who are given financial and emotional support to enable them to complete their education.

**Sustainability** This model of child care provision has proved very successful and sustainable with over 60 children able to move through the educational system to graduate from a variety of universities, colleges and vocational institutions.



**Photograph of Marciano Teixeira with some of the young men and women who have been enabled by ORE to fulfil their potential. To the left of Marciano is Dawit who has graduated as an accountant and is now employed in that role in Mekelle. On Marciano's right is Girmay who is a qualified nurse and at the front of the picture on the right is Brho , now a social worker with ORE.**

Proof of the effectiveness of the loving provision for the children is evident in conversations with the young people attending the centres.

These are the testimonies of just two of the young people who have benefitted from being in Operation Rescue [ORE).





### **Dr Abrha Woldu Woldu**

I am 25 years old and was born into a very poor family. I was raised as an orphan. Many people and organisations have helped me as a student to achieve my dreams. I thank Operation Rescue a lot. I wish I could repay but me being successful is achieving Operation Rescue's goal. So here I've become a medical doctor. Congratulations ORE. My next goal is to become a neurosurgeon. God bless you all who have helped me and will be helping me in my future life.

### **GIRMAY HAILAY**

My parents who loved each other, did not get the chance to see me, their son grow up. My father died in the war with the Derg, [Communist regime] and my mother fell ill with a disease and died. Then I started to live with my aunt but she passed away in 1994.

I was alone but I was taken in by the Operation Rescue child care project. They gave me clothes and food and school materials and looked after me when I was sick.

Old people say 'when God made a mountain he prepared a ladder' Operation Rescue was my ladder and I started to live a brighter life. I started to learn and I was an outstanding student up to Grade 7 but then I started to do badly at school, my behaviour became bad and I started to smoke. When I went to my home I wasted my time with people who were behaving badly. The workers at Operation Rescue did not give up on me and were full of hope. They treated my bad behaviour with love, with good advice, always giving so much. These are honest kind servants of God.

After many changes in my life I graduated in accounting and English language and I came to the Operation Rescue project in Adigrat as a teacher. God changed my life with his wonderful wisdom. He used many wonderful people such as Marciano Teixeira, Getachew, Hiwot, Abadi and so many other workers in Operation Rescue. God is changing many people's lives through them.



## **Vision and Sustainability**

Although local and national government authorities are most supportive of the work done by Operation Rescue, they provide no funding and over the last 16 years the project has been supported by a variety of individuals, organisations and churches in Europe, including supporters in Northern Ireland and England and in America. The project has made amazing progress in this sixteen years and is full of faith and vision for the future.

### **The vision is now to establish a fourth centre in Ethiopia in a city called Maichew.**

Using all the poverty indicators such as low income, poor health service, high unemployment, numbers of street children and orphans and elderly people without support, Maichew registers very highly.

The vision is to establish a centre in Maichew, which can cater eventually for 300 children. Using the same community based model of care, described above, which has proved itself since 2000, the new centre has the potential to transform the lives of these children. They will be valued and cared for and enabled to develop physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. They will be empowered to fulfil their potential within an ethos that always gives them dignity and encourages them to value themselves and their own local culture. As has been the experience of so many children helped by Operation Rescue since 2000 in the three centres already established, this new centre can make it a realistic possibility for HIV/Aids orphans and street children living in destitution and without hope to become young men and women who can access education and vocational training, enabling them to support their own families and contribute to their local communities.

Fulfilling the needs of these desperately poor children will be at the heart of the project and, as has been proved in the other centres, it will have a powerful impact upon the families of the children and indeed upon their local communities. All the indications are that it will be possible to obtain land for the centre from the local authorities free of charge which is a clear indication of their support for the organisation and its future.

Operation Rescue is committed to long-term engagement with the local community in Maichew, as is the case already in Mekelle, Adigrat and Adwa.