

PRESS NEWS RELEASE: "GOVERNMENT GIVES AWAY ORPHANAGE & SCHOOL COMPOUND"

Benishangul-Gumuz, Ethiopia, Africa — President Yaregal Aysheshim, appealed to *Blessing the Children International* in Kawkawlin, Michigan, to take possession of and operate an orphanage and school newly constructed by the government. In an agreement signed on July 11th, 2005, the government will provide the facilities free of charge: A 500-bed compound situated on 100 acres of land in the town of Kamashi. The government completed construction of the 500-bed orphanage and school in 2003, but due to a lack of operational funding, the complex remains empty. In July of 2005, President Yaregal approached Keith Strawn of *Blessing the Children International* to receive the compound on a 20-year, no-cost lease, if his ministry would operate and fund the project.

Benishangul-Gumuz is truly a land abandoned by time; a people whose standard of living is 100 years behind fellow countrymen, and nearly 2,000 years behind that of the average American. Education, healthcare – even the most primitive farming strategies – are virtually unknown. Many tribes remain unclothed and worship nature, animals, and witch doctors.

"I want to do everything I can for my people," says President Aysheshim, "especially for the children." President Yaregal is from the Gumuz tribe, one of the five indigenous tribes comprising the majority of the inhabitants in the region. The other four tribes are Berta, Shinasha, Mao and Komo. He is a president who loves his people and whose people love him, as demonstrated by his recent re-election to his third term office.

Since the fall of communism in 1990, the country has not recovered. Extreme poverty continues to plague the land with an average income per person of less than \$100 per year. In addition:

- Life expectancy is just 46 years of age.
- Adult illiteracy is at 61% and with only one out of three children in school, it's a trend that will continue.
- One out of ten children die before reaching their first birthday and one out of six die before age five.
- Only 11% of the population in urban Ethiopia have access to improved drinking water. This leaves nine out of ten children drinking unsafe surface water they share with their animals and the rest of nature.
- Ethiopia is one of the countries hit hardest by the AIDS pandemic. With 4 million orphans in Ethiopia (20% as a result of AIDS), it is a major problem that the government describes as, "tearing apart the social fabric" of the east African nation.

In a recent report from UNICEF, Ethiopia was identified as one of the two poorest countries in all of Africa (page 37 of the report found at: [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_\(English\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_(English).pdf)).

In response to the Presidents appeal and to the great need in Ethiopia, *Blessing the Children International* will open the "Kamashi Orphanage and School" on December 1st, 2005. For the past four years, *Blessing the Children International* has been working in Ethiopia with the Blair Foundation to sponsor and plant 1,000 new churches in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region. The Blair Foundation announced August 31st, 2005 that it has attained the goal of 1,000 sponsorships.

"The project of educating and caring for 500 children is much bigger than we are," says Keith Strawn of *Blessing the Children International*, "but as God provided sponsorships for the 1,000 churches, He too can provide for the needs of these children. It is not going to be easy, but if God's people will respond with His compassion, the need will be met."

Ethiopia is facing a crisis of orphans. The Kamashi Orphanage and School project is build on James 1:27, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." If we do not respond and reach out, who will? If not now, then when?



The Kamashi Orphanage and School is seeking monthly sponsors for 500 orphans along with funding sources for capital improvements and startup up expenses. Some examples are a well for safe drinking water, a water storage tank, beds and furnishings, text books (English) and school supplies, computers, clothes, etc. A 40' container is scheduled to be shipped from the United States this December, in which donations of the above items can be sent to the orphanage.

To learn more about this 21st century opportunity or to join with us in reaching out and caring for the poorest of the poor, please contact:

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