

# DIGNITY FOR CHILDREN

Association for helping extremely poor children  
and street children in developing countries



More than 200 people came to the German Church in Addis Ababa in late February, when German and Ethiopian musicians played together for street children in Ethiopia's capital. It was an extraordinary concert full of enthusiasm by young musicians. The event marked the end of the joint project "Building a bridge with music" by the German NGO Dignity for Children and its Ethiopian partner Hope for Children. During ten days the four Cellists of the Berliner Cellharmoniker Rouven Schirmer, David Drost, Andreas Kipp and Johannes Ziegler played for children in different schools and after workshops with music students from Addis Ababa University two concerts were held: One on 23/02/05 in the Hilton Hotel and one on 25/02/05 in the German Church.

Anna Lena Schmidt and Jesko Johannsen from the board of Dignity for Children together with the founders of Hope for Children Yonas Tesfaye, Gizachew Ayka and Hawi Badasa had the idea to organise this trip almost two years ago. They wanted to increase the work for the street children by bringing classical music to Ethiopia. Nobody really knows how many children live on the streets of Addis Ababa. While the Ethiopian government estimates the figure with 150,000 – 200,000, UNICEF and actively engaged NGOs talk about 500,000 – 700,000. The children's daily life is subject to inhuman and shameful living conditions. Many have run away from their families due to poverty or violence. They have nothing to eat, they sleep under plastic shelters and they live in the dirty and dangerous streets together with straying dogs. The city's garbage containers make out their 'table of food'.

While the local staff of Hope for Children is familiar with the culture and understands the problems of the children better, Dignity for Children assists with support for individual projects and with sponsorships. Hope for Children contacts children living on the streets directly on the street and invites them to their counselling centres where they get information and the opportunity to benefit from the program. That ranges from food distribution to educational and sport activities. The main target groups of Hope for Children are street people, prostitutes, poorest children and their families, children who lost their parents due to HIV-AIDS and HIV positive children. More than 9,000 children have been helped so far.

After the German NGO Dignity for Children was founded in 2003 it became clear that the association's work would have a special focus on culture. Encouraging children to use their own ideas, creativity and capacities to support their way out of poverty is a key element in the

NGOs work as well as widening their horizons through intercultural exchange of ideas and perspectives. That was why this concert trip with German musicians was organised in early 2005 to support the work in Ethiopia and to experience an intercultural exchange of German and Ethiopian musicians. Under the supervision of Israel Dejene from Addis Ababa University musicians from the gospel choirs Servants of God, Sisters in Christ, the Philadelphia Choir and music students from Addis Ababa University participated in the concerts together with the Berliner Cellharmoniker.

Almost 400 people came to the concerts and by that helped to raise ETB 25,000.- The intense preparations of the musicians paid off in two very successful concerts, which the audience clearly enjoyed very much. At the end of the concerts the musicians were celebrated with standing ovations and encores. The revenue is dedicated to Hope



for Children's "Self-dependency for illiterate teenagers project". The project is designed to support 15 children (ten boys and five girls) who have been misused as labour force and have no family to care for them. The children are between 14 and 18 years old. Girls will be enabled to start a small business (like shops), boys will continue to work as weavers but will be self-dependent. Each child will be equipped with materials such as a loom for a weaver and get a room for living and working. The rent will be paid by Hope for Children for six months before the child starts to earn its own living during daytime. In the evenings the child attends evening school. The children will also get training and HIV/Aids awareness education.

Dignity for Children is always looking for new sponsors that are willing to help a child by giving as little as Euro 9,-- a month. Becoming a sponsor is possible through Dignity for Children's webpage [www.childdignity.org](http://www.childdignity.org).