

Multi-Decade Ethiopia Intervention Begins with Hope for Children



Training in EMDR in the mid-90s, Dorothy Ashman, **M.A.**, and Psychologist never dreamed of teaching the therapy to others. Chance encounters, inspiring relationships and partnership with Trauma Recovery Humanitarian Assistance Programs produced extraordinary, life changing outcomes in Ethiopia over the last decade, beginning with the kids at [Hope for Children Ethiopia](#).

Meeting Trauma Need Head On

When Dorothy Ashman trained in EMDR Basic with Dr. Francine Shapiro in 1996-97, she had no intention of ever training others. She went on to become an EMDRIA Approved Consultant, and Trauma Recovery/HAP and EMDR Institute Facilitator. Ten years after her training, her son's 2007 humanitarian mission and film project in Ethiopia led to an introduction to Yewoinshet Masresha and her life changed. Yewoinshet, a social worker and psychologist, founded **Hope for Children Organization of Ethiopia** in 2001 to nurture over 800 children affected and often orphaned by HIV/AIDs. When Dorothy and Yewoinshet first spoke by phone, Yewoinshet asked if Dorothy could bring trauma treatment training to Ethiopian clinicians. They desperately needed to help the many children robbed of their childhood; traumatized by the loss of parents, homelessness and often infection by HIV/AIDS. Dorothy believed EMDR was the answer and promised to find a way.

Ethiopia EMDR Initiative

Dorothy turned to Trauma Recovery/HAP to determine how EMDR trainings, Trainers, Facilitators, and necessary training materials could be sent to Ethiopia for local trainings. In less than a year, with significant funding from HAP and Dorothy's successful fundraising efforts, a five year annual EMDR Basic Part 1, Part 2 and Specialty training session began in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



November, 2009 - Dorothy Ashman, Catherine McLaughlin, Yewoinshet Masresha picking up the EMDR manuals from a local copy shop



Each year Dorothy would set aside a month or more from her private practice to travel to Addis Ababa, to set up the EMDR and Specialty training, qualify local clinician participants and Facilitate. She then stayed on to provide consultation to new and previously trained clinicians each year.

Dorothy estimates approximately 120 clinicians completed Part 1 training and 75 completed Part 2 training. The last onsite training was completed in 2014.



February, 2013 - Ethiopian EMDR-Trained Therapists, Advanced Specialty Training



February 2013, Addis Ababa EMDR Trainings - Dorothy Ashman-Facilitator, Reyhana Seedat-EMDR Trainer from South Africa, Yewoinshet Masresha-Founder of Hope for Children, Joset Munroe-Facilitator

2020 Ethiopia – Renewing Hope Through Shared Purpose

In late 2019, Dorothy decided to reconnect with her Ethiopian EMDR-trained colleagues and determine how she might resume contributing to the local EMDR community. She discovered a vastly improved digital infrastructure, widespread understanding and use of the internet and social platforms, and a mental health clinician community with a thirst for knowledge, shared experience and education. Dorothy joined forces with four Ethiopian clinicians:

- Selamawit Tesfaye, Social Worker, MSW, EMDR therapist, and Creative Communications Specialist/Writer;
- Hilina Atlabachew Taye, Social Worker, MSW, EMDR therapist;
- Tigist Waltenigus, Psychologist, EMDR therapist, Host of twice-weekly radio show on Mental Health, and weekly TV show on Mental Health and
- Ephrem Bekele, Psychologist, Internet Technology Director,

...to form the Ethiopia **EMDR Organizing Committee**. The group has been meeting weekly for the past year, and together organized and created various online platforms, providing trainings and resources for Ethiopian therapists, and initiating communication with previously-trained EMDR therapists throughout Ethiopia.

The Organizing Committee has created two public Facebook pages available to everyone, and two private Facebook pages just for Ethiopian therapists. Texting groups have also been created

to help therapists communicate with each other and to share times and dates for trainings and Zoom meetings. The offerings include:

1. **Mental Health Network - Ethiopia** – a public Facebook page to educate Ethiopians about Mental Health. Ethiopians post general information and videos about Mental Health on this site: <https://www.facebook.com/MHNETHIOPIA/>
2. **EMDR-in-Ethiopia** – a public Facebook page to educate Ethiopians about EMDR: <https://www.facebook.com/EMDREthiopia/>
3. **MHN - Ethiopia Discussion Group** – a private Facebook page open to any Ethiopian professional in the Mental Health field. It contains resources, handouts, Mental Health videos and trainings, as well as an opportunity for Ethiopian professionals to communicate with each other.
4. **E-in-E Discussion Group** – a private Facebook page that is only open to Ethiopian EMDR therapists. It contains EMDR resources, training videos, announcements, and a place for them to discuss questions about EMDR.

Every two weeks, the **Ethiopian Learning Community** meets on Zoom. It is open to any interested Ethiopian Mental Health clinician who wants to ask questions and share ideas about therapeutic issues and resources. The meeting is hosted by Dorothy and 2 other EMDR therapists, Phyllis Strauss, Ph.D., and Joset Munro, LICSW, who participated in the original EMDR training initiative back in 2009-14.

All these efforts come at a time of renewed conflict between Ethiopia's military and regional forces from the northern Tigray region. An estimated 41,000 Ethiopian's have been displaced fleeing the conflict.

Additional projects in progress include recording trainings in collaboration with Trauma Recovery/HAP, and once Internet connections improve, the possibility of offering virtual Basic and Advanced EMDR Trainings for the Ethiopian professionals who have been unable to access EMDR trainings since 2014.

On-going Contributors include:

Phyllis Strauss, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Consultant - Jerusalem, Israel. With Dorothy, Phyllis developed and presented a webinar on how to do therapy over the phone to help the Ethiopian therapists connect with clients after COVID-19 began to impact their country.

Joset Munro, LICSW, EMDRIA Approved Consultant, Trauma Recovery/HAP Facilitator - Rhode Island, USA. Joset traveled to Ethiopia multiple times to help Facilitate EMDR trainings. In additions she developed specialty trainings on Dissociation and Sand Tray Therapy for the EMDR therapists.

Esly Carvalho, Ph.D, Psychologist, Trainer, EMDR Institute/EMDR IBA - Brasilia, Brazil. Esly recorded a Flash Technique training for Ethiopian therapists, which is available to them on the private MHN Ethiopia Discussion Group and is planning to offer more trainings to the Ethiopians in the future.

In addition to expressing appreciation for Trauma Recovery/HAP for their financial and enthusiastic support, and her co-contributors above, Dorothy recognized the contribution of **The Institute for Creative Mindfulness**, its faculty members and several others trainers and facilitators to support the trainings, all of whom can be found with a synopsis of this article [on the HAP website, here.](#)