



S E L  M T A  
FAMILY PROJECT  
2023 REPORT

Dear Selamta Family,

Abundant life. At the start of this year we felt like 2023 was going to be the Year of Abundance. We knew we had some hard decisions to make and in some critical areas we had to step out in faith, but we felt like we could do it with confidence. Then it got hard. Inflation continued to grow. The dollar wasn't stretching. At times we were scraping by. The notion of abundance became scarcity. We became distracted by the lack right in front of us and it kept us from seeing all the things going on around us. Jesus tells us in the book of John, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it **abundantly**." How foolish of us to measure abundance in economics. Abundance is not found in financial wealth alone. It's found in relationships. It's found in families. It's found in community.

Join us as we reflect on just how abundant 2023 has been for Selamta. We hope these pages encourage you to look up and see the abundance filling your life.



Marisa Stam  
Executive Director



Tamrat Kebede  
Ethiopian Director



Andrew Burmeister  
Board Chair

## MISSION

Selamta brings hope and healing to orphaned and abandoned children by recreating and empowering families.

## VISION

Children growing up knowing their God-given dignity and worth through the love of a healthy family.

## APPROACH

Selamta has been recreating and empowering families since 2006. Our ability to provide healing and restoration lies in the incorporation of wrap-around care, community integration, and permanency throughout every aspect of our programs. It all begins with an intentional relationship with one individual, one family at a time.

# PROBLEM & PREVENTION

Today over 5.5 million children are orphaned or abandoned in Ethiopia. Separated from their biological family due to poverty, death and disease, war and other factors, these children are left to figure out life on their own. Some find shelter in a government orphanage. Many simply live on the streets fending for themselves.

Selamta's work begins upstream of the problem by providing relevant resources to families in the community. In this way we are able to prevent vulnerable families from breaking apart in the first place.

*"My family is one of my strongest assets, because they are here. I am able to succeed in my studies and I am physically and emotionally healthy."*

**Meba, Outreach Youth**

*"I have access to educational resources, a library, and a computer lab. My family received training on different topics, and medical expense coverage at a time I needed assistance. We also received financial aid for my studies allowing me to keep going, easing the financial strain on my family."*

**Kidist, Outreach Youth**



# FOREVER FAMILY

Should a child lose his/her family, if no one steps in, they will be alone to suffer in cycles of trauma and loss that continue for generations. Becoming a member of a Forever Family breaks those cycles. Rooted in a stable family within the local community, they can experience healing and grow in a loving and secure home.



*"Most people think that family is made biologically, but it is not true. Family is not only made biologically but by the heart. We (my brothers and sisters in Selamta) are not from the same mother and father but our relationship and trust go beyond that. People also think children growing in institutional care are not well engaged in the community. This is not true for us because we live like others in the neighborhood. My friends don't think of me as a child from an institution, rather from one of the homes in the community."*

Betty, Selamta Youth

*"It (permanency) makes you live a stable life. It feels safe for you to think that it is permanent. You always have someone to rely on and look back to."*

Belay, launched 2017

# LIFELONG NETWORK

A photograph of three women of African descent smiling and holding their young children. They are standing in front of a wall with vertical stripes and decorative patterns. The woman on the left is wearing a white top, the middle woman is wearing an orange top, and the woman on the right is wearing a white top. The children are dressed in white shirts and dark pants or dresses.

As children are nurtured within the environment of a healthy family, they are equipped and prepared to become independent and confident adults. Even after they launch, they continue to have a lifelong network of support which includes:

- A family they can always come home to through life's highs and lows
- Career guidance, networking, and small business loans
- Parenting support, family counseling, and life skills training

*"When I was living life in my Selamat Family, as any normal family, it helped me start my own family without any challenges or worries. It gave me a chance to integrate in the community, access resources, and experience family love."*

**Betelham, launched 2021**

*"Our mom feels responsible for each one of us even after we have launched. She is involved in our individual lives. Because she is a mom she always keeps herself informed about her children's lives. Now we want her to live a stable life resting and enjoying because she deserves to be served by us now. It is time for us to give it back to her, since she sacrificed her life for our success."*

**Belay, launched 2017**

## Small Victories

Selamta's two newest Forever Families were established just one year ago. The children from these families first came to us from two different orphanages - the government run boys' orphanage and girls' orphanage. As you can imagine, this caused a great divide and even animosity between the two groups. Even after moving into their homes, rivalry continued.

Over the last year, through the patient love of their moms and Selamta staff, coupled with intentional opportunities to build trust and connection between the two groups, we've seen small victories emerge.

Today, that initial division between girls and boys in each house has melted away. It's been replaced with sibling bonds as they share meals together, laugh, help each other with their homework and cheer one another on during Selamta house competitions.

*"We do not argue now. We are learning new family rules, such as taking responsibility for things we do, respecting each other while talking and communicating our needs to our mom. We spent the new year together and everybody was so happy, we helped with preparing food as well."*

**Maru, Selamta youth**

*"Recently, Jimma girls and boys were cheering for their siblings together while Arbaminch kids were doing the same for their own. You can see they identified themselves as one."*

**Etsegenet, Psychosocial Team Leader**



# A New Chapter

Meet Mahlet, a young adult from our first generation of Forever Families who launched to independence earlier this year. She became part of her Forever Family at age 15 when she was reunited with her older sister Selam. The girls had been separated for 7 years after their biological mom passed away. Reflecting back, Mahlet shares how growing up with her older sister was “the best thing that happened in my life.”

Surrounded by her loving family and a stable network of support, Mahlet graduated from college in 2021 and confidently transitioned to living life on her own this past May. Although she admits this new step had its challenges, she didn't have to walk through it alone.

*“Leaving my house, transitioning to independence was not easy. It has challenges. I was excited and happy one time and feeling sad and worried other times. But the support of my elder sister, my mom and the staff strengthened me. My mom prepared me dry food and spices to use and helped me purchase items. My sister helped me with ideas and even cash when I needed it. The staff was always by my side, encouraging me.”*

Today, Mahlet has fulfilled her dream of working with and serving other kids as a member of the Selamta staff.

*“When I was in college, I had a chance to work as an intern with Selamta's finance team. The things I observed there pulled me to serve more. The way they interact with each other, the way everyone cares for the kids, how they serve with heart impressed me. “*



# CULTURE & VALUES

## FAMILY

(Psalm 68:5-6)

*"Family is the place where healthy relationships, trust, and safety are formed and given."*  
Betty, Selamta Youth

*"Family is a source of strength and helping each other."*  
Meba, Outreach Youth

*"Family is everything; a family is one whom you share everything with and gives love unconditionally."*  
Million, launched 2023

## DIGNITY

(Genesis 1:27 & 31)

*"Dignity is shown in respecting one another and listening to one another."*  
Bizuayehu, Selamta Mom

*"Dignity is our kids recognizing their worth and that they deserve to be valued."*  
Enatehun, Selamta Mom

*"Dignity is the respect we receive from people for who we are."*  
Mekdes, launched 2022

## HOPE

(Romans 15:13)

*"Hope gives life to us and the kids. It helps the kids see their future and work towards it using the resources available."*  
Enatehun, Selamta Mom

*"Hope is a belief which makes us look and live forward to the next day, month and years to come."*  
Million, launched 2023

*"Hope starts from living today and using opportunities to reach our dreams."*  
Betty, Forever Family Youth



These values, chosen and defined by our team in Ethiopia, guide the way we interact and how we make decisions. They reflect our dedication to our mission and vision:

- Family
- Sustainability
- Transparency
- Authenticity
- Respect
- Excellence



# HEART & HOME

Heart & Home Monthly Partners provide the sustainability Selamta families need to thrive. Your monthly or annual gifts meet the daily needs of our families and create space for genuine, loving relationships that bring hope into each heart & home.

*"Through the Global Mission Sunday sermon at our church, my wife and I felt compelled to be a part of God's bigger story in Ethiopia. Even through this small (monthly) gift, we pray that God would continue to do a good work and allow these children to know how loved and valued they are."*

Stuart, Heart & Home Partner

**\$50/mo or more**

Neighbor

**\$150/mo**

Mentor

**\$300/mo**

Family

**SCAN  
QR CODE  
TO JOIN**



# COUNTRY-WIDE IMPACT

As our team works diligently to care for the families we serve with excellence, their influence has reached far beyond Selamta's community. Over the last year, Selamta has played a significant role in local efforts to reform the way vulnerable children and families are cared for nationwide. Our team has contributed in the following ways:

- As members of a committee formed by the Government to reshape national policies and directives surrounding child welfare issues
- By providing trainings and support for other organizations and agencies on topics such as trauma-informed care, organizational processes, and our best practices
- Through partnering with like-minded organizations, sharing resources, learning from one another, and working collaboratively to reach a common goal
- When we bring people together under one roof from diverse backgrounds, with varying ethnicities and beliefs to live in unity, celebrating their unique gifts, we get a small glimpse of God's design for relational and church families



# TRANSPARENCY & THE WAY FORWARD

Transparency, being open and honest, is a core value at Selamta. It includes sharing our wins and our challenges. It means being open-handed with what we've been given whether it's resources or methods. It is publicly disclosing our financials and voluntarily joining associations like ECFA, CAFO and Candid which assess our performance against their standards of operation.

Throughout 2023, Ethiopian inflation has been a significant challenge. The USD is not exchanging at a rate to keep up with market inflation. While our fundraising has been robust for this economy and we've welcomed many new partners into the Selamta Family, there have been lean weeks as we press into the Lord for wisdom and guidance, understanding more completely what it means to be content with much and content with little.

Good stewardship has always been a priority for our team. We strive for excellence regardless of our balance sheet and our team does not disappoint. Sustainability for our current families remains the priority. But that does not diminish the need. There are so many children, as the number grows daily, who have been orphaned or abandoned and need to know their God-given dignity and worth through the love of a healthy family.

We stand firm on this verse in 2 Timothy 1:7 - "For God didn't give us a spirit of fear but of power and of love and a sound mind." (NKJV)



**DONATE NOW**





*"We get to partner with a number of different organizations around the world that are doing this work and we choose our partners very carefully because we want to make sure we are investing in work that is actually effective. Among those partnerships we have found few that are more effective in solving the realities of vulnerable children and vulnerable adults simultaneously than Selamta in Ethiopia. Their creation of a family unit and bringing those two worlds (orphans and widows) together to create this new version of a family unit is wonderful to behold and it has been our absolute privilege to be part of that story. It has been our privilege and continues to be our privilege to fund as significantly as we can, this organization, and to be a part of the stories that they are affecting on behalf of the Gospel."*

**Renault van der Riet, Leader Pastor of Mosaic Church,  
Orlando FL**



**Selamta Family Project**



**SelamtaFamilyProject.org**



**@SelamtaProject**



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