



Dear all IFSO's Board, Management, and Staff

I am really pleased and grateful to take part to this 20th Anniversary of IFSO establishment.

I arrived in Ethiopia for the first time in February 2007, this makes now 9 years ago. Since that moment, day by day, effort by effort we have achieved together a lot of results. IFSO has been my entry point to the Country. Thanks to IFSO staff I have discovered Ethiopia and, most importantly, Ethiopians. Together, we have supported thousands of children and their families: children victims of sexual abuse and violence; HIV positive children; children so poor not to be able to attend school.

Starting from an approach focused on the immediate satisfaction of children needs, we have gradually developed a more encompassing, holistic approach that address and goes beyond children's needs and includes providing families and communities with the instruments to create the necessary conditions for development.

We have moved from Addis to South Wollo in Amhara, where we have witnessed the challenges of the rural Ethiopia: high risk of drought and famine; food insecurity; high rate of illiteracy; gender discrimination; lack of access to education, high rate of migration to foreign countries. In response to these challenges, we are now concentrating our efforts on promoting gender equality, strengthening access education, economic women empowerment and creating awareness on different topics. So far we have had a lot of achievements we are really proud of the school results of the girls hosted in the hostel in Wuchale, the economic independence gained by hundreds of women, the sensitization campaigns on girls' education which reached a lot of communities' members! Proud of this successful partnership.

Now we are working hard to tackle a new challenge: mitigate the main causes of illegal migration from Ethiopia to the Gulf countries.

In these nine years, we have enjoyed wonderful moments and faced hard times but here we are: we continue side by side trying to do our best to improve the lives of children and women.

Continuing to grow together.

Congratulations IFSO for this important anniversary!

And as we say in Italy "Cento di questi giorni!" (wish you best of luck for the future)

**Marco Pastori**

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