

How You Can Help

Children, women, men, young and old, Mossy Foot affects people indiscriminately. The only common denominator is poverty and the fact that even in this day and age some people still have to go barefoot because they cannot afford a pair of shoes.



What Does It Cost?

90 Birr (≈ 10) will put shoes and a year's supply of socks on a child's feet. 360 Birr (≈ 40) is one month's salary for a part-time outreach worker.

900 Birr (≈ 100) will train a patient in shoe-making skills and provide them with a tool kit and leather to start their own shoe production.

2250 Birr (≈ 250) covers fuel to travel to each of 14 outreach sites twice per month.

204,255 Birr (≈ 22,695) provides vocational skills training to 165 patients over the course of one year.

Please make cheques payable to the Mossy Foot Association, or make a direct transfer into the MFA account (details in next panel).

Organization Details.

The Mossy Foot Treatment and Prevention Association is an Ethiopian charity, registered number 532. It was founded in 1998 and registered with the Ministry of Justice in 2000.

The ultimate mission of the Mossy Foot Association is to eradicate the disease. Its objectives are to prevent, treat and rehabilitate people with Mossy Foot. This is done through outreach treatment clinics, provision of surgery to selected patients with advanced disease, and training in new areas of work such as shoe-making, mechanical and electrical work, hair-dressing and beauty care, bicycle maintenance, for example.

The Mossy Foot Association is also engaged in training health professionals and educating the wider public about the condition by visiting schools and organizing meetings in churches, mosques and *kebeles*.



MOSSY FOOT ASSOCIATION

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M o s s y F o o t — T h e F a c t s

The Condition.

Mossy Foot - also known as **Podoconiosis** - is a condition caused by exposure of bare feet to irritant alkalic clay soils. It is found across tropical Africa, central America and North India where such soils co-exist with high altitude, high rainfall and low income. In Ethiopia about one million people are affected by the condition. It is unique in being an entirely preventable non-communicable disease—it was eliminated from parts of Europe through universal use of shoes.

Economic burden

In a southern Ethiopian zone of 1.5 million inhabitants, where the prevalence of podoconiosis is known to be 5.4%, the overall cost of the disease was estimated to be in excess of US\$16million per year. In this zone, where the average income is less than US\$100 per year, the direct costs to a patient are US\$143 per year.

Social stigma.

Individuals with podoconiosis are highly stigmatized. They may be excluded from school, rejected by their family, barred from social and religious gatherings and banned from marriage to any unaffected individual. Siblings of affected individuals are also frequently barred from marriage into unaffected families.



Lidya's story (not her real name)

Lidya's mother and father farm a small plot of land 50 km west of Sodo in Wolaitta Zone. Lidya was 13 years old when she first noticed swelling of her feet. For nearly a year, Lidya managed to hide

the swelling from her family and school friends by wearing long skirts. The swelling became firmer, and she became aware of a slight ooze between her toes. Her mother noticed, and reacted badly, saying Lidya had brought a curse onto the family. Lidya became more and more miserable, realizing that she would have to stop school, and would probably never marry.



Finally, in the middle of one night, she resolved to jump from a tree to end her life. Thankfully her father stopped her. He said she must talk to her uncle, who had the condition and had recently found a way of treating it.

Lidya's uncle showed Lidya how to treat her feet with soap, antiseptic, ointment, socks and shoes supplied by the Mossy Foot Association. Within four months, the ooze stopped and the outgrowths on her feet disappeared. Lidya invited people from the Mossy Foot Association into her school to explain the condition to other students, and aims to train as a nurse once she has finished school.

Prevention and Treatment

Podoconiosis is an entirely **preventable** and **non-infectious** disease. It can be avoided through the regular use of leather footwear. However footwear remains an unaffordable luxury for residents of most affected areas. Once a person is affected by the condition, it is possible to stop the progression of early symptoms by training in foot hygiene (washing daily with soap and water), and encouraging the use of socks and shoes. Advanced disease may require surgery to remove large nodules.



Rehabilitation



Most important of all is social rehabilitation for patients, who need to find a new role in life since they can no longer work the land. Ex-patients

are trained to make shoes for themselves and other patients. Others are offered vocational courses in hairdressing or bicycle repair, so they can earn a wage.

