



Light Years IP

Engaging Intellectual Property to Increase
Poverty Alleviating Trade

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LIGHT YEARS IP NOMINATED FOR PRESTIGIOUS HUMANITARIAN PRIZE

U.S. NGO Light Years IP has been nominated for the Hilton Humanitarian Prize for work in reducing poverty in rural Ethiopia. The NGO designed a corporate business strategy that has brought over \$200 million of extra export income to fine coffee farmers in rural Ethiopia since 2007. “The coffee farmers now receive about 85% of export income,” said Ron Layton, Chief Executive of Light Years IP, “That means a large scale strategy is sure to reach the coffee families, bringing improved health, education and, most of all, the power to decide how best to use extra income for family benefit.”

Light Years IP designed the Ethiopian Fine Coffee Trademarking and Licensing Initiative, raised funding and helped Ethiopia implement the complex project. Many in Africa were amazed at the results.

“The suffering of human poverty is mainly caused by low and uncertain income, leading to inadequate schooling and inability to buy food, medicine and other basic needs,” said Mr. Layton, who personally funded the Initiative. “Unfortunately, farmers dependent on large world markets face extra problems as the world market prices rise and fall due to factors beyond control of the farmers and producers.”

If achieved with increased incomes, income stability directly reduces poverty because knowing the level of next year’s income allows a family take poverty-relieving decisions, perhaps starting with investing precious funds in sending a 12 year old child to school for the first time or an eye operation for a productive family member. Unstable commodity prices cause families to suffer even more than their income level would suggest because the commodity prices rise and fall, creating further instability for families trapped in poverty.

Controlling trademarks and other Intellectual Property, as Ethiopia now does, stabilizes as well as raises incomes. Trademarks last forever.