

## **Drilling Well, Providing Clear Water, and Promoting Peace in Borena, Ethiopia Lewis & Clark College**

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### **Summary:**

With the generous funds from the 100 Projects for Peace Grant, our group of five members procured the resources to drill two water wells in Borena, Ethiopia. Water is a scarce natural resource in this dry and hot region of Ethiopia, and it is not uncommon for conflict to arise over water usage, which is why the wells we provided will go a long way in diminishing resource conflict in the region.

### **Outside Fund-Raising Effort:**

The \$10,000 grant was the first step in covering the estimated \$11,500 cost of building a well in our original budget; therefore, our group also planned on additional fundraising to cover the entire cost and we implemented our ideas throughout spring semester. We hosted an Ethiopian-themed fundraising dinner that was attended by over 70 people. We used social networks, local media, and old fashioned word-of-mouth to advertise our dinner. We were able to contract our school's catering company to serve the dinner for zero profit. To minimize catering expenses, we recruited volunteer servers.

We started selling tickets three weeks before the date of the dinner, but we also realized during the process that there were also people eager to support our project who nevertheless were unable to attend the dinner. In order to tap into that group as well, we created a *GoFundMe* account that conveniently allowed people to support our project through online donation.

We also contacted local businesses that were unable to give us monetary support but were willing to support our project in other ways. Some stores donated gift cards, some donated rare items, such as expensive wines, and one store donated all refreshments for the event. We auctioned off the donations at the dinner. In the end, we raised \$565 from the dinner and the auction, along with an additional \$1,223 from our *GoFundMe* website. We thank the friends, students, staff, professors, and boards of trustee members that made our effort worthwhile.

Originally, our project proposed to drill only one well, but our successful fundraising led us to entertain the idea of drilling two wells. We did not have the money to construct an additional well, but we mobilized our group and persuaded leaders of various student groups and departmental administrators to meet with us. We paid particular attention to those groups whose mission statement shared a similar 'social justice' goal that was a cornerstone of our project. In the end, five different institutional offices and six student groups helped us raise \$7,703 in addition to what we raised from the auction dinner and website.

### **Project Details:**

Our project proposed to drill two wells in a remote region of Borena, Ethiopia. Thanks to our exceptional fundraising efforts, we acquired enough fund to drill two wells in the same region. The villagers told us where they thought would be the best location for the wells. We compiled and placed the location of the two wells about one kilometer apart from one another. The resource for drilling the wells was primarily provided by Actions for Development, a non-profit organization based in Ethiopia. With the funds we gave them, they provided the tools, pumps, and concrete coating for the wells.

We wanted the local villagers to be involved in the drilling of the wells. We did not want this to be yet another example of westerners coming to "rescue" third world "peasants." We wanted the villagers to feel as if these were their wells, that it belong to them and that they should extend to it the same protection that they extend to their most beloved possessions. We knew that the only way for this to happen was if the villagers were involved in the drilling of the wells. We wanted them to have

something at stake. We asked the more “well-off” member of the region to donate land where we could drill the well. A generous individual by the name of Getchu Kmirta donated a portion of his land for us to use. We drilled the wells on that land, and we recruited volunteers from all over the region to help with the project. Again, we did this so the villagers can feel a sense of ownership over the wells.

We appointed two committees of seven people each to oversee the wells. We insisted that each committee have at least three women as members. This request was respectfully followed. The two committees oversaw some of the day-to-day activities of the volunteers. In the end, the committees also took a course on water conservation and usage, which we stipulated Action for Development to provide.

The project took two and a half months to complete, but in the end we had two functioning wells that provided clear, crisp water to over 1,000 people. It was an extremely satisfying experience. One of the committee members told us that they considered the wells to be their “babies,” and that they would protect them with their lives from harm. There was no better way to tell us that the villagers really did take ownership of the wells.

### **How We Defined Peace:**

Peace is defined in a myriad of ways, but for our purposes the definition of peace that can most accurately be applied to our project is the kind of peace that comes from shared recourse; from not having to struggle and fight over the most basic element of life. Our project will allow over 1,000 people to experience that kind of peace.

### **How our Project Contributes to Peace? (Long and short term):**

Our project solved the water scarcity problems that have plagued the villagers for decades. In the past, the region of Borena has experienced a lot of conflicts stemming from issues related to water scarcity. Thanks to our project, with a little hope, this kind of conflict will never be repeated in the region.

### **How our Project has Affected Us:**

“Working with others on a grass root project not only gives you satisfaction and confidence on achieving whatever goal you have in mind. But it opens up your eyes to see the reality by inspiring you to take action.”--Seile Alemayehu

“Being at the site and seeing the smiles on the beneficiaries’ faces made me realize that the small things we take for granted like water mean the world for most of the people in the area. ” (Mihret Teklmicheal)

“It was an extremely satisfying experience.”--Selam Mentire

“‘Give and it will be given unto you,’ the good book says. Well, we’ve been given infinitely more than we gave.” Temesghen Habte



An example of the finished well



Local women helping on the process of building the well



Some of the water committee members and elders from the village