

Davis 100 Projects for Peace

Kenya Well Project Final Report

Neema Scott

Smith College, Summer 2007

USA Resident, non-UWC attendee

The goal of the Kenya Well Project (KWP) is to bring peace by strategically placing wells on both sides of inter-tribal conflicts due to water scarcity in Northern Kenya (East Africa). KWP intended to focus on the on-going clashes in the Isiolo, Nakuru, and Marsabit Districts. It was hoped that by building six water wells (one well each side of the conflict) would significantly reduce the violence in these areas, while simultaneously providing training to the local community in drilling methods so that more wells may be drilled in the future, resulting in improved quality of life via access to reliable water sources.

The major participants who agreed to work with KWP was Dr. Cathy Fitzgerald (a water engineer from Nevada), Major Jillo Dima (a friend living in Isiolo), and a private advisor/donor. The role of Dr. Fitzgerald (also financial contributor) was to lead the construction of the first well (since she has substantial drilling experience) and also to teach me the drilling process. Major Jillo's role was to organize for all aspects of the well construction within his Isiolo community. Lastly, a Kenyan friend was to organize the community participation (as well as significantly discounted transportation rates) for the wells in his homeland of Nakuru district. Given the many contacts and assistance, the project was anticipated to take no more than eight weeks of field work.

The first stumbling block that the KWP encountered was a financial problem. KWP was informed that the proposed budget was significantly underestimated due to inaccurate information regarding equipment costs. It was then determined that the best way to move forward would be to focus on drilling three quality wells in two violent areas instead of the planned six. In addition, it was suggested by Dr. Fitzgerald that KWP drill the first well in the Turkana District (a desert environment which also has an active history of violence over water) since she knew of a contact who was looking for a partner to drill in this remote area. The suggestion was accepted as the goals of the project would still be accomplished.

Using the proposed Terry Waller well drilling method, Dr. Fitzgerald, myself, and several hard-working and dedicated students and missionaries went to Turkana to drill the well, while also training the community and leaving them with the supplies and knowhow to drill at least one more well following our departure.

Unfortunately, the first well ran into technical problems and resulted in the KWP being unable to complete the project in the allotted time. The only remaining work is to put the pump on the well. The whole team was very disappointed; however, the main contact for the well (a man named Randy Coates) is determined to complete the well in the near future. Since I have graduated and will be living in Kenya until December, I intend to ensure that the well will be completed before my return to America.

Following the Turkana well, another major issue surfaced. A call was received from the friend from Nakuru (who is now living in States) informing me that he needed to refund the deposit which was given for his travel because he would not be able to come to Kenya to assist KWP (as an emergency had come up). Considering this friend was the sole contact for the Nakuru wells, these wells had to be abandoned, causing KWP significant financial burden since the cost of transportation in a different location would be substantially increased without this friend's vehicle.

KWP decided to focus on the major on-going battle between the Borana (who live in Isiolo) and Randille (who live in Marsabit) peoples. Using Major Jillo as my major contact, a significant amount of time was spent traveling, meeting with parliament aspires, district water commissioners, elders, and chiefs. These meetings were meant to ensure that the not only the government supported the project, but also that the community would support and participate in the project, location selection, and training program. It was also during this trip that poor water hygiene practices were observed. Watching people casually drink water of brown and even green color caused me to decide to add water safety seminars with the women of the communities into the KWP goals.

Following these political meetings, the well engineer informed me that he needed an additional two weeks to finish some work before he could attend to KWP work. This delay, in addition to hitting hard rock during drilling in the Marsabit region, caused over three weeks to be added to the time table, bringing the entire project to about twelve weeks.

The KWP activities over the summer of 2007 can be summarized as follows: KWP completely constructed two beautiful, functional water wells (one for the Randille's, one for the Boranas), one partially completed well in Turkana, trained and donated equipment for three communities, and gave five seminars about water boiling practices to women in the three communities.

The work of KWP over the summer was a success. While the goal of completing six wells was not accomplished, and the locations needed to change, the main goal of the project was to bring peace to violent regions by providing water, which was fulfilled. In the end, two wells are completed with not only words of appreciation, but also confidence from the community that KWP has helped to stop much of the violence in the region. It is anticipated that the third well will soon also bring similar results. In addition to aiding in the creation of peace, KWP has enabled men to build future wells safely and productively using the equipment donated. KWP has also taught women about water hygiene and boiling water, perhaps preventing future illness in the community for generations to come. Considering the latter, it is believed that KWP has made a positive difference in many lives in Kenya.

As this journey, filled with failures, triumphs, frustrations, and celebrations, comes to an end, I have learned much, yet two lessons stand out: the first is to remember the greater good. In this world, it often occurs that the leaders and representatives for people are not thinking about their community but rather about themselves, and are even willing to sacrifice assistance to their people for their own benefit. I have learned that when one encounters this, it is important to swallow your pride and do what is best for the community, what is right, regardless of how wrong the people you work with are.

The second lesson KWP has taught me is that there is always a way to make things happen. Even when you think the abandonment, frustration, corruption, financial stress, and heartache is too much, there is always a way to make things happen; especially when you have loving and supportive parents, family, and friends. It is possible to make a difference in this world.

This has been an amazing experience and I am *very* appreciative of Ms. Kathryn Wasserman Davis for this life changing opportunity.

Thank you!

Amber Dawn Scott
"Neema"



The first completed well for the pastoralist Randille people of Koya (Marsabit District). In this photograph is me (holding the ribbon), the Chief of the village (at the pump), the well engineer (on the other side of me), and local community members.



The first completed well for the Borana people of Bisan Biliqo (Isiolo District). In this photograph is me (holding the ribbon), the Chief of the village (at the pump), the well engineer (on the other side of me), and local community members.



This is a photograph of me (green shirt) in Koya teaching the women and children about safe drinking water and boiling water (props for the demonstration are on the table). Next to me is the translator.