

100 Projects for Peace Final Report - Summer 2007

Title: Providing Water, Empowering the Samburu Women

School: St. Lawrence University

Student(s) Information:

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Project Summary: Describe location, timeframe, participants, other funding involved, scope of work, and goals intended.

The project was conducted in the Samburu District, Kenya, from 7th - 12th August, 2007. Phase I was the drilling and building of a well for the Lorian, Ngalai West community, which was arranged and supervised by The Samburu Project Organisation (TSP) in July 2007. The well sponsored by 100 Projects for Peace was drilled alongside seven other drills in the Samburu District in late spring/early summer. Phase II participants included Mukhaye Muchimuti, the TSP team, and 32 representatives from communities that had received wells through the TSP organization. The representatives participated in a two-day workshop on Water Hygiene and Sanitation & Well Maintenance and Repair which was led by the TSP team. Also, the women of the Ntareto women's group of Lorian, Ngalai West (Wamba location) were instrumental in the well-site selection. Further, we visited the various communities from the different well sites funded by the KWD 100 Projects for Peace and the TSP this year.

The goals of the project were as follows:

- To provide the communities with the know-how to maintain the wells free of contamination and to obtain clean and safe drinking water.
- To provide a steady source of clean water for human and livestock use in close proximity to the Lorian, Ngalai West community.
- To reduce the distance and amount of time spent in the search for clean drinking water.
- In the long term, to allow the women of the immediate community to have more free time to engage in Income Generating Activities (IGAs) that can benefit them as individuals and, more importantly, as a community.

Project Results: Self-evaluate the project; your assessment should enumerate what goals were and were not accomplished.

The project was highly successful as the short-term goal of providing water close to the community was met. Their water source was a seasonal river over 20 km away. During the dry season, they would dig shallow wells in the river bed and let the water run until it was fairly clean, a process which would take several hours. These shallow wells did not provide much respite, however, because they would return the next day to find the water dirtied by baboons and other wild animals. Worse yet, the animals would cave in the well such that the well digging and/ or re-digging would have to be a daily process. Consequently, the men would sometimes spend the night by their family's well to ward off the unwanted guests until someone came to fetch some water in the morning.

Since it is the women and girls who are traditionally charged with the responsibility of searching for water, they would often leave the children home alone. In many cases, they had to leave well before 6 am and return late in the evening. As a result, the children would often

spend the entire day hungry and thirsty, awaiting their mothers' return. The children can now eat more regularly because there is a constant supply of water. Further, the availability of clean water for cooking and drinking means a decreased incidence of water-borne diseases (especially among children) because they often shared their water sources with wild animals and would sometimes fetch their water from **inside** the shallow wells. They can now bathe and wash their clothes more often because of the well.

The community members expressed their gratitude and great relief especially for the reduced walking distance. There is no longer the threat of facing wild animals when searching for water which is now within a short walking distance of the homes. As a result, even young children can be sent to fetch water at the well while their mothers go about other business within and outside the home. Further, the women anticipate reduced cases of miscarriages associated with the water burden which was borne by many even in pregnancy.

Implications: What are the project's implications for peace? What are the future prospects for the project? What have you learned?

Peace, for me, is manifest in a high quality of life in which the most basic needs are met. Providing water for the Lorian community means allowing the primary care givers (women) to be better able to focus on their community's needs. Further, it means that there will be fewer interruptions in the education of young girls especially during the dry season. The project means a sustainable water source, a greater sense of stability and an all-round improvement in the community's health. In a community where livestock is highly valued, losing an entire herd during a dry spell is akin to losing one's livelihood. There is very little peace of mind in a community that lives in a constant fear of losing their property, personal safety and being unable to eat or even clean oneself regularly for lack of water. Even when water was available, it involved numerous health and personal safety risks such as digging shallow wells on dry river beds and the attendant risk of encountering wild animals that were also in search of water. Doris Lemoloi, a member of the local women's group, indicated that the availability of water had caused more peace in the families because there was reduced stress owing to the absence of water.

The future prospects for this project are numerous. Firstly, it is anticipated that there will be improved nutrition since the Ntareto Women Group intend to start a small-scale farm using the well water for irrigation. A farm means a source of some revenue and also an improvement in the wider community's nutrition. With time, they expect to have more livestock to provide meat and milk and to expand their farming activities. Based on the success of the project and the community's plans to date, I anticipate even more IGAs in the coming years. I learned that there was much that could be done just by solving this one problem that has been a great deterrent to progress over the years.

