

Title: **Jorit Clean Water Project for Peace in Ethiopia**
Country: **Ethiopia**
College: **Princeton University**
Students: **Hassen M. Yesuf and Fatu S.Conteh**

The Project:

We propose to build a well in the village of Jorit, Ethiopia, to provide a clean water system for its residents. The system will significantly alleviate the prevalent dire conflicts associated with scarcity of water in the village. Our project, which will last for one month, has two main undertakings. First, we hope to revamp the existing, almost unused and inefficient spring; and second, construct a new hand-dug well in the village. Both undertakings are essential to fully satisfying the basic water needs of the community. By storing water in a clean and impermeable collection chamber, the revamped spring will improve the quality and quantity of water needed by the village. Spring development is cheap and requires minimum drilling. Most materials required to develop springs are usually available in the village. The villagers will dig a hand-dug well of 1.5 meters in diameter and 15 meters deep and an Afridev, which is a public domain hand pump, will be installed. The pump is very durable, 'village friendly', used widely in Africa, and available locally.

Background

Jorit, a semi-desert village of about 1,000 people, is located in Northeast Ethiopia. It is 325 km from the capital (20 km from Hassen's hometown). Residents live in mud and thatched huts, and share space with their livestock. The average family size is eight in number, and the livelihood of the people depends on subsistence agriculture and raising livestock. Due to small land holdings of about 3 acres per family and a primitive farming system that is rainfall dependent, famine, malnutrition and poverty are rife in Jorit. The village lacks basic infrastructure and services such as water, electric supply, a primary school and a health post. In fact, poor sanitation is a major cause of health problems in the village. Fortunately, past hydro-geological and geophysical studies conducted by the local government has identified the project area as having a favorable media for groundwater storage and utilization. Personal experiences in villages have inspired us to start this project. The hopscotch and rope-skipping Fatu used to play every morning with her friends in Sierra Leone while waiting for long water queues, form some of the most unforgettable memories of her childhood. Likewise, memories of the excruciating pains due to water-borne illnesses that Hassen experienced growing up has humbled and inspired him to do this project. We are hopeful that this water system will extricate a handful of people from the shackles of such easily preventable diseases. Our cultural knowledge and sensitivity place us in a uniquely advantageous position to successfully carry out the proposed project.

Aim of the project

In general, poverty and underdevelopment are breeding grounds for strife. Large scale water related armed conflicts are rife in both South and North Ethiopia among different ethnics groups. Much emphasis is placed on the larger implications of these disputes and little attention is given to the small-scale effects that water scarcity has in destroying the family and undermining peace and unity in the community. This project will not only better the lives of the villagers by addressing the basic need for clean and safe drinking water, it will also increase the prospect for peace in the family by removing the devastating effects of acute water shortage.

In villages like Jorit, women and children are traditionally assigned the duty of fetching water. Failing to carry out these duties for whatever reason sometimes results in corporal punishment or domestic violence. A UN report, which stressed the level of violence in the country, indicated that nine out of ten women think that their husbands are justified in beating them (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2005). Hassen's preliminary survey suggests that the main concern of most women in Jorit is getting their arduous household tasks done so that they can avoid incurring the displeasure of their husbands and consequently avoid being beaten. These women try to rise early before anyone else, walk for hours looking for and fetching water. They are responsible for looking after children and cooking. They are aware of what will befall them if food and drink for their husbands are not delivered on time.

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Worse still, some husbands get unreasonably suspicious when their women are gone from the house for long hours looking for water. It is the dream of most of these women that they and their children will have water sources nearby to help them more easily carry out their duties and thereby create non-threatening environments in their respective homes. In addition, altercations also often arise among women over their positions in the water queue; and although it is not so frequent, inter-village conflicts also arise over shared water resources and grazing areas for their livestock. With the above facts in mind, this project has the following specific aims:

- Reduce disputes and conflicts that arise due to acute water shortage.
- Empower women and children to improve their productivity by saving time, thereby reducing the burden on these vulnerable groups. With time saved, women can take care of other important house duties or engage more profitably in small-scale business. Children will be free to go to school.
- Increase well-being and health in general, and reduce infant and child mortality due to water-borne illness by providing safe-drinking water. We will also raise awareness about sanitation and hygiene and organize outreach and educational programs.
- Increase awareness among Princeton students about other cultures and some of the challenges and problems facing the developing world; promote international understanding and cultural exchange. Upon our return from Ethiopia, we will host a panel discussion to share our experience with the rest of the Princeton community.

This project is creative in that it is cost-efficient and will have a huge impact in the lives and well-being of the villagers, especially women and children. We will work side by side with engineers and community members to build the well, help with organizing workers, buy and carry equipments, assist in clearing the well site, and ensure the well is completed on schedule. We will spend a few hours a week organizing a mentorship and language educational program by recruiting volunteers from the neighboring town to teach Amharic, the national language, to the children in Jorit. This will form the beginning of a program that will employ the newfound free time the children will have. Some of Hassen's high school teachers have already agreed to work with us to recruit student volunteers, supervise, and ensure the sustainability of the program long after we are gone. Some of our work will include arranging means of transport for the volunteers by asking owners of public transportations to offer these volunteers free rides to Jorit couple of days a week. Such charitable acts are commonplace in Jorit.

Many of the mothers Hassen talked to have expressed a desire for their children to go to school. None of the children goes to school because there are no schools in Jorit; the nearest school is about 10 km away. As education is inextricably linked to peace, by organizing this program, we will be planting a seed that has a potential to grow into a formal education system. To accomplish all of this, we will be assisted by the village chief, community leaders in the village, as well as volunteer experts in a town nearby who have assisted us in drafting the project assessment. The experts will also be responsible for all technical aspects of the project and for training the community leaders on how to efficiently and sustainably use and maintain the water sources. We will also consult with NGOs such as Glimmer Hope Foundation, which have extensive experience in funding water projects in other parts of Ethiopia. Glimmer of Hope (GH) has successfully carried out more than two thousand such small but life changing projects in the South, but villages like Jorit in the North have not been beneficiaries of such NGOs. In addition, GH was successful in introducing multi-purpose water projects, which include components such as protected faucets for drinking water, showers, latrines, basins for washing clothes, and separate drinking troughs for animals. We hope to replicate such projects in the future.