

40 years on... and 22 years of WellWishers



School children at the well at Mai Liham Elementary School, Limat village, Tigray - clean water for 125 children plus nearby villagers.

40 years ago -1984 - the world turned its attention to the great famine in Ethiopia. The harrowing pictures and story broadcast by Michael Beurk on the BBC led to relief activities on a scale not seen since World War 2. There had been disastrous famines in Ethiopia before – 1958: 100,000 lives lost, 1972-75: 200,000 lost. But the 1984-85 famine ultimately killed 1.2million. While these famines may have begun with poor weather, they grew rapidly worse because of Ethiopian government policy. In 1984-85 the big added factor was the attempted government use of famine to kill off a rebellion in the north of the country, in Tigray.

Australia's Community Aid Abroad (CAA) responded quickly. Its focus was on the people of the north who were being denied aid by the Ethiopian regime. CAA sent 3000 tonnes of flour and high protein biscuits. Strategically, CAA negotiated with the 'rebels' in Tigray to assist with establishing a village-based and technically appropriate domestic water supply program. In 1985 the 'hand-dug' wells project was initiated as a training program for locals with equipment supplied from Australia. I was privileged to be chosen to go across the Sudanese border into the war zone in Tigray to work with the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) to manage the CAA side of the project. Over the next 17 years the program became established, and hundreds of villages benefitted.

Changes in CAA/Oxfam including a decision to no longer be involved directly in Ethiopia, meant that funding for the wells program was wound up.

Ross Allan was a member of the CAA/Oxfam Board at the time and decided that he and his wife Marianne were not ready to relinquish the Australian connection with the REST water program. For a time they personally funded the continuation of Australian support for the wells program, but in 2002 Ross established WellWishers Trust with four Trustees.

WellWishers Trust has steadily supported village water supplies in Ethiopia ever since, and the family of supporters have donated over \$5.9million to fund water supply for 1130 communities – 366,500 people! A big Thankyou to Ross and Marianne for getting us started and continuing to give, and to all who have contributed over the last 22 years. CAA's early support and WellWishers subsequent vote of confidence has enabled REST to develop water partnerships with many other non-government organisations around the world, constructing hand-dug wells, deep borehole drilling and irrigation systems. It's true: From little things big things grow.

Graham Romanes, Trustee and Honorary Manager, WellWishers Trust

Our program for 2024

WellWishers has contributed \$352,041 this year for the construction and rehabilitation of 66 wells. Our planned year-long program was support for 40 wells (including one school), and additionally we funded urgent rehabilitation of 26 wells in March. It is progressing very well. If you would like REST's interim report (October 31) in words as well as a complete list of wells, please email me at grahamromanes@gmail.com or ring me on 0419559138

Askale Amare, one of the 13,824 beneficiaries of your support in 2024



Askale Amare, is a mother of three from Laelay Maychew District, Adi Tsehafi municipality, Enda Abunelibanos community, in rural Tigray, Ethiopia. Askale faced a daily struggle to access clean water.

“Before REST/WellWishers came to my community at the start of 2024 I had to walk 30 minutes each way to an overcrowded open river, often spending up to three hours waiting for my turn. This unsafe water source frequently led to waterborne illnesses, tragically claiming the lives of two of my children.

The well has changed my life so much. I only have to walk five minutes to get water, and I can now spend time with my loved ones and on my small farm. And now I don't get sick from drinking water.” The well is called “Geba Aday” and serves 125 people. (14.18336 38.69535 if you want to locate it on Google, but it's hard to see in the trees...)

Thank You Ross and Marianne

Earlier this year, Ross and Marianne Allan offered to match any new donation of \$2500 or more to a maximum total of \$50,000. We are delighted that his offer was taken up by 10 donors. A wonderful start to our commitment for 2025. Thank you Allans!



Very happy women at Shoshihay well, Mai Berazyo village.
(Google maps
14.123122 38.53979
(easy to see the well))

Seasons Greetings with hope for peace

Many communities in Ethiopia continue to suffer from conflict. The 2020 peace agreement has brought stability to most of Central and Eastern Tigray, enabling us and our partner to get on with life saving work. To those communities in Ethiopia and all round the world who still wait for peace, our thoughts and prayers go out.

For our WellWishers and their families our best wishes for the season and the New Year.

All donations over \$2 to WellWishers are tax-deductible.

WellWishers: Bank of Queensland BSB 124048 or 124001 (either are OK) and Account no. 21658949

Contact: Graham Romanes, WellWishers

PO Box 27 Brunswick South VIC 3055

Phone: 0419 559 138

Email: info@wellwishersethiopia.com

Website: www.wellwishersethiopia.com