

Partnership the key to success



Kisanet Mehari at the Gonai Daero well, Mesamu village, Tigray - clean water for 270 villagers. Rehabilitation of the well after conflict, funded by WellWishers, completed early 2024. We funded 66 such wells in 2023. You can see the well on Google maps at (13.25592, 39.44896)

Our key partners: The Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and communities in Tigray

Over my 44 years of involvement in "overseas aid" - mainly in Africa - I have come into contact with hundreds of overseas aid agencies and local groups engaging in helping poor communities. The spectrum of activities ranges from urgent relief work in disaster situations to long-term training and education programs or resource provision.

Clear to me is that the success of development work in poor communities is the involvement of a community-based organisation in the field, able to define community needs and a strategy for change. Outside agencies may have good ideas and resources to offer, but in my long experience externally driven change will not bring about long-term development.

REST: The Relief Society of Tigray

REST was formed in 1978 to provide food aid to vulnerable communities, bringing food across the border from Sudan into western and central Tigray. Australia's Community Aid Abroad (CAA) funded the purchase of a 10-tonne truck for REST in 1978. REST's work soon spread to support communities for health centres and very basic schools.

During the well-known famine of 1984/85 REST took on the task of supporting the millions in Tigray Region who were being denied humanitarian assistance from the Ethiopian government. The national government was once again using food (or the denial of it) to pursue its campaign against the people of Tigray who wished to see the end of military rule.

REST mobilised international assistance to support the long trek of hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans to refugee camps in Sudan, and their subsequent return while also supporting Tigrayans to stay in safer villages. It was in these 'rebel' held areas REST was able to begin its work in agriculture. With support from Community Aid Abroad, REST began its long journey into provision of village water supplies through the low-tech method of 'hand-dug' wells. Over the next eight years a

highly organised and capable Water Department in REST was created. Today REST's water group has expanded its work to deep borehole drilling, solar powered water reticulation and irrigation schemes. But our hand-dug wells program in remote villages continues as a key component - supporting health through clean water and reducing women and girls' labor in water collection.

REST's program in the management of natural resources – soil and water conservation, catchment management, and irrigation schemes - has flourished. Rehabilitation of a degraded environments has been achieved in large areas through terracing, tree planting and gully erosion control. Seed distribution has been a critical part of the food security program. I will always remember the woman farmer at Quiha near Mekelle in the late 1980s who was harvesting a crop of wheat. When I asked her where the wheat seed had come from she told me she had kept back a small proportion of Australian wheat supplied through REST as food aid and planted it! In 1994 REST established the Dedebit Credit and Savings Institution to provide small loans for farmers for the purchase of farm animals and chickens or for the start of small businesses. It has 500,000 clients and is the fourth largest microfinance institution in Africa.

REST has a highly skilled and dedicated staff and remains the key local non-government agency (NGO) in Tigray, fully in touch with Tigray's rural communities. 2024 is my 40th year of close association with REST. I can say without qualification that of the scores of NGOs I have worked with in Africa, REST has been outstanding in its relations with communities, with its reliability in program delivery and accountability.

Graham Romanes, Trustee and Honorary Manager, WellWishers Trust



The Well Committee at Gereb Adihayle



Arsema, Alula and Beti at Gereb Adihayle



A small flock, seed money from Dedebit Credit and Savings



A fine spinach crop - seeds and support from REST



Gebrerufael from Adwa, is participating in post-war recovery programs. Thanks to training in vegetable production and receiving seeds and tools, he turned things around! He received special potato tubers which brought him a significant income of 22,500 birr (Aust\$450)! Now he is also harvesting and selling green peppers, further boosting his household food security and income.



REST is providing sorghum seeds to 1,000 smallholder farmers in southern Tigray. This initiative will provide seeds for over 370 hectares of land.



Women are now speaking out and taking key roles in Tigray. The WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) committees which manage the wells are required to have equal numbers of women and men, and in most cases the chairs and treasurers are women. Provision of a village well begins to address the burden of hours spent daily collecting water by women and girls, and the health problems such heavy loads bring about. A well frees up time for girls to go to school. Clean water reduces the time women use taking their families to clinics with diarrhoeal

REST and WellWishers 2024

As outlined in previous Newsletters (available on the News page of our website (www.wellwishersethiopia.com)) REST continued its critical work during the conflict in 2020-2022. Some staff were killed, resources looted, staff worked without wages. Now with the outbreak of peace in the last 18 months REST is seeking support to catchup lost time and restore infrastructure. WellWishers has agreed to an initial \$307,000 for this year's hand-dug wells program. It would be fantastic to be able to send more!

Thank you for all your wonderful support!

Tax Receipts

We will issue receipts for tax deductible donations, covering the whole of the tax year, early in July.

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



DONATIONS

- \$7500 will cover the cost of one well for an entire community, providing clean, accessible and permanent water for about 225 people
- \$2500 will cover the average cost of restoring a war-damaged well
- \$170 will provide permanent water for a family
- Donations of any amount are most welcome for our life-saving village water program!

Name:

Postal address:.....Postcode.....

Email (if you have one).....

My Donation is enclosed: \$. (Cheques or Money Orders made out to WellWishers)

OR Debit my Visa / Mastercard - donation amount: \$.....

Name on card:

CARD NUMBER: Expiry...../..... CCV.....(last 3 numbers on the back of card)

Signature..... Date:.....

OR Donate online (Secure site): www.givenow.com.au/wellwishers

OR Donate direct to WellWishers account at the Bank of Queensland:
BSB: 124048 or 124001 (either are OK) Account No: 21658949
Please leave your name and postcode as reference.



QR code for GiveNow

Name for Tax Deductible Receipt purposes if different from bank account or card

Name:.....

Please send me information about making a Bequest to WellWishers

MEMBERSHIP:

Membership of WellWishers is for the calendar year 2024

To become a member of WellWishers please complete the form below with the Annual Membership of \$3.00 (payable with unused postage stamps). Your email address would be very helpful for contact purposes.

Name:

Email:

WellWishers Postal address:
Email address:
Telephone:
Website:
ABN:

P O Box 27, Brunswick South, VIC 3055
info@wellwishersethiopia.com
0419 559 138
www.wellwishersethiopia.com
20438857300

