



Heart for the Poor - What is your vision? Richard Barter Feb 23 2010

Reflecting on our approaching 30th wedding anniversary to me back to being a newly married young graduate in the beginning of the 80's going abroad to explore the world. We had the privilege of living for a couple of years in Holland and Switzerland some of the wealthiest countries on the planet. Lovely parks, good roads, efficient rail services, cool cafes and miles of foot and cycle paths. It was all there; safety, cleanliness, good information systems, access to a wide variety of imported and local goods and the availability of nice housing.

So it was with a clear image in my mind's eye of those people friendly European cities that I took up the challenge on returning to NZ to advocate on behalf of the people of Mt Roskill here in Auckland for better infrastructure and services. With the help of a great team on the Community Board much has been achieved and residents now have choices that can enhance their lifestyles. I can now cycle 3/4s of the way to TEAR Fund each day on a lovely tree lined path.

While preparing to speak to you another set of images came across my desk from Somaliland. Like where on earth is Somaliland? It is on the horn of Africa at the entrance to the Suez Canal. A three year drought has just broken with the much needed rain stemming the flow of desperate rural people abandoning their arid lands creating stress on nearby towns and cities. For these communities to be viable, cisterns they use to collect water must be repaired. The images of women lining up with yellow plastic containers waiting for the water trucks are in such contrast to my pleasant reminiscences of Europe.

With the rain comes a small window of opportunity to put the resources that have been directed to trucking in water towards the long term sustainable goal of repairing cisterns which costs \$5,000NZ enabling up to 300 households to secure a water supply for the next dry season by having their cistern repaired. It is not too hard to conjure up a picture of those Somali families drawing water from intact cisterns to irrigate their crops, quench the thirst of their children, their livestock and engage in that activity we take for granted, the prerequisite of dignity, being able to wash oneself. Can you dear listeners see this picture, can you imagine just what access to water means to these families. I believe God instils visions in our minds that we may be inspired to fulfil his will. Isaiah was one God has filled with images of what could be...

Isaiah 11:6-9: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox ... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Prayer: Father God the world you created was good, but sin cracked its perfection. Inspire within us visions of what you had in mind when you laid out the oceans and forests. Inspire within us the will to be creation restorers, to provide for those that you love, the widow and the orphan. Inspire within us the hope for a future that will be blessed and honouring to your greatness. Amen.



Finish

Report from Somaliland



Horn of Africa

Somaliland (Somalia)

In Somaliland's drought-stricken Togdheer region, Medair is sending emergency truckloads of water to dozens of remote communities—with over one million litres trucked so far—to save the lives of these most vulnerable people who have nowhere else to turn.

“We have lost many livestock due to this drought. It’s a lot of pain,” said Mohamed Abdi Farah, who lives in the small village of Atena and supports a large family of 18 children. “We have been preparing to move away, since we can no longer stay here and just wait for death.”

Across Somaliland, severe drought conditions have led to a mass exodus from rural areas, and the looming threat of famine and death. In May, the government declared a drought emergency, and appealed to Medair and other NGOs in “the most strongest terms” to provide urgent



humanitarian assistance to those made most vulnerable by the drought, which is 40 percent of the population.

“The situation we are facing is most frightening,” wrote Mohammed Mohamed Muse Awale, Commissioner of Somaliland’s National Disaster Management Committee.

Medair conducted an immediate assesment of the most critical villages, together with the Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources and a local partner. The team concluded that drinking water was urgently needed in rural communities, which traditionally rely on “berkads” or water cisterns to collect and store rainfall.

“Unfortunately, many of these berkads are cracked and have fallen into such disrepair that what little rain does fall cannot be held within them,” said Daniel Ndege, Medair’s Water and Sanitation Project Manager. “Another source of water is urgently needed.”

Water Trucks En Route

And so, within 10 days of the government appeal, Medair began sending trucks filled with water down myriad dusty roads to villages where the need was greatest. Tearfund New Zealand provided strong funding support to make this life-saving intervention possible—an intervention that is still underway today.

Medair discovered that, in many communities, the livestock had been moved to areas where the water and grazing were better. However, the most vulnerable people (elderly, children, women, and the disabled) had often been left behind in arid villages because they were too weak to travel. With so little rain, and no sources of water, these people have seemingly been left alone to die. Finding these forgotten people remains Medair’s top priority in villages in rural Togdheer region.



“I am old and have no strength to move and look for water,” said 60-year-old Guled Mohamed Agararan. “I was waiting for my death because no one was left in the village. They all had moved in search for water until Medair came to my rescue. God protect Medair and give them more funds to help the needy.”

Another priority for Medair is to provide water for families who would otherwise join the exodus of people leaving their home villages for the long migration in search of water, like Mohamed Adbi Farah and his very large family.

"We thank Medair and the donor who has given this money because we were preparing to move, since we could no longer stay here and wait for death," said a grateful Mohamed Abdi Farah. "We were like a woman suffering in the pain of labour with no midwife to help, and Medair came just before the 'child' died. Long live Medair and the donor!"

Emergency Efforts Continue

In the last two months, Medair has trucked in a total of 1.2 million litres of water and saved the lives of some of the most vulnerable and desperate people in Somaliland. Our efforts continue to this day, with water currently being trucked to 32 villages in southern Togdheer region.

“Once this emergency phase passes, Medair will continue with critical health, nutrition, and water and sanitation activities in the region,” said Henrieke Hommes, Country Director. “We are also seeking funding to rehabilitate the broken-down community berkads so that people will be able to collect and store more water when rain is scarce.”

“Medair has saved many lives since they started the water trucking in this region,” said Abdirisak Mohamed Ajep, Director of Water in Togdheer region. “We have informed the president of Somaliland what Medair has done, and he has thanked the donor who funded the process.

“In addition, my people in Togdheer have asked me to give Medair a certificate of appreciation to express gratitude for the live-saving water which has kept many people alive today.”

You can support this ongoing emergency intervention in Somaliland by visiting [WEBSITE link](#) and making a donation today.

The Medair Programme in Somalia

After an extensive assessment process in 2007, Medair launched a new integrated Health Services and Water and Sanitation programme in Somalia in March 2008 to respond to the high level of need of the vulnerable population. Our programmes focus on rural areas where conflict- or disaster-affected populations have not received sufficient humanitarian assistance, or where current humanitarian capacity is insufficient to address the most critical needs. Medair works through local partners to build the technical and management capacity of local NGOs, health workers, and national staff.

Somaliland declared itself independent from Somalia in 1991. Their independence has not been recognised by the international community.