

Human's Right to Water
Kalamazoo College
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One fateful evening in January, I was following my usual routine of watching at least one documentary or expository video on youtube before heading to bed. Next to my bed was my eco-friendly bottle on my nightstand filled with water to the brim. It was my second bottle of the day, which I intended to finish by the time the credits start to roll. While scrolling through a list of documentaries and videos I saved on my "watch later list", I came across a video titled "Nestle Waters: Big and Controversial". I clicked on the video not knowing what to expect, other than it being controversial. At this point of my life, I was at a stage where nothing on the internet shocks me anymore; until I heard the narrator of the video state that "The CEO of Nestle Says Water is not a Human Right". I was upset; I went down the rabbit hole clicking video after video trying to learn more about the other horrendous things this company has been doing. Later that night, when I reached out to grab my bottle in order to finish my last bit of water; I thought of my people and the refugees who live in Ennedi region; the deserts of Northern Chad.

The last time I heard from these people, the lake that their animals drink from and the few wells they themselves drink from were quickly drying up. My brother had the opportunity to go there in the summer of 2017; when he came back, I asked him about the conditions of our tribe and the surrounding tribes in Ennedi region. keep in mind, this group of people rely on herding and trading animals for livelihood, therefore animals are as important as water for them to survive. During the time my brother spent there, he recalled how water was so scarce that they had to make the choice between themselves and their animals (their livelihood). He was able to show me a bottle of water that people in the Ennedi region drank on a daily basis. The water was brown, mulky, and dirty. I couldn't believe my eyes at the time. I was worried for their health; especially the ladies who walk long hours in the sun to congregate at any of the few wells available for the sole goal of acquiring "water," rather than clean water, I am referring to "water" as a liquid which might appease their thirst. It does not have to be clean, but it should be watery enough to cook with and pass through their gastrointestinal tracts. The ladies in this region are the most vulnerable group. During their pregnancies, more than half of them either miscarry or die during childbirth. Water to the people of Ennedi region is considered to be a luxury. Looking and hearing about their situations; I could not help it but feel bad that I am not even willing to drink water

from my kitchen tab. When I heard how the conditions were getting worse back in 2017 from my brother; I wanted to give a helping hand, but as a sophomore in highschool, I couldn't do anything. All the programs that I looked through for funding required a certain age group or a level of education that I haven't reached yet. Luckily, in the afternoon of the following day that I watched the video "Nestle Water: Big and Controversial", I received notification from Teams about the "Davis Peace project". I clicked on it thinking it was an internship opportunity. I read through the details about the program; at that moment, I knew an opportunity to help my people, the surrounding tribes and the refugees in the Ennedi region had arrived.

There is a saying here in the United States which goes like this; "Cartoons bring children together" and "Football brings men together". Similarly, I would argue that water brings the different tribes in the Ennedi region together. Pipes are still not a thing in this region; therefore people in the community get their water from the few community wells that were installed previously by the Empower Human Needs Board. The wells are the hangout spots for people of the community to get to interact with each other. Getting the funds to Build solar panel wells will not only give the people of Ennedi region the right to a basic human right, but also create a community where its citizens would not have to decide between themselves or their livelihood.

I am very excited to get this opportunity to give the Ennedi people the right to clean water. As soon as I get the funding and summer break begins, I plan to commence my project. I will be collaborating with the Empower Human Needs Board program to facilitate the process. The Empower Human Needs Board has been on a pause for the last couple years due to the lack of fundings. Additionally, this program is run by people I know in that community and they are super excited to work with me. I will be responsible for providing the funds and also working together with them to decide which areas of the Ennedi region would be the best place to place these wells. I also will be overseeing every step of the process to make sure these wells are built the way the locals want. This project to me is successful when I see people around it pumping fresh clean water. As a native speaker of the Ennedi people's language, I would be able to communicate with them, listen to their concerns and opinions. I also belong to the Beri tribe of the Ennedi region which is why I'm always aware of the situations in that region. I am always in contact with the locals there so I'll be continuing to show my support . This collaboration with the Empower Human Needs Board puts me in a spot where I will be receiving progress reports even beyond this coming summer collaboration.