

Jemal Abdulhadi
Alpha Sigma 19'
ASF Summer Enrichment Final Report

This year, I was thrilled to have been selected as a recipient of the Alpha Sigma Summer Enrichment Scholarship, an opportunity that enabled me to conduct a social justice venture leaving a sustainable impact. It's always been a dream of mine to give back to my beloved nation of Eritrea, so applying for this was a no-brainer.

My broad and knowledgeable perspective from being surrounded by numerous motivated and impactful brothers in Chi Psi played an important role in my decision to carry-out such a project.

It's no secret that the focus of some of the strongest economies have shifted toward concentration in technology and media. In putting emphasis on developing these areas, Eritrea can experience growth in current industries, communication, export capacity and versatility, as well as see the emergence of new industries.

During my time in Eritrea, I was able to address some areas hindering economic growth in Eritrea: education, clean energy, affordable water, textiles/design and research.

1. Education

Every year 5% of students drop out while 13% repeat a grade.

I firmly believe motivation is the center of education. Students in Eritrean schools look at our country's situation and lose hope. They envision a future unlikely to include higher education or a lucrative job, and lose inspiration. Thus, they lose focus and drive rather early in high school, before they even take their matriculation exam, the determining factor on whether a student is sent to SAWA or University.

Making the students aware of sociocultural, classroom environment, and internal factors allow students to be able to recognize motivation and begin tailoring it to their goals.

Addressing methods to mitigate risk factors that inhibit motivation, and explaining how to be conscious of them is also important in furthering a student's understanding. They include:

- A sense of obligation to family
- Having caring teachers
- Personal attributes that propel success

I also covered the concept of Self-regulated Learning, which focuses on metacognition and understanding how to improve learning performance.



The first group of students I spent my time with were 9th and 10th graders. They were all members of NUEYS, the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, a program focusing on development and growth programs for youth in Eritrea. Because of this involvement, I spent less time addressing motivation and taught an introduction to personal finance as well as the steps to crafting a resume and its extreme importance. I also thought sharing my experience at an American university would prove interesting and open perspectives for these students, so I did just that.

I also chose to incentivize the students by asking recall questions and shelled out \$1000 Nakfa in prizes for those who attempted an answer.



They were an amazing group: surprisingly attentive and full of questions. I was thrilled by their participation and spent time after to speak casually with students while hearing about their aspirations and goals in life.

I worked with another group of students who just completed the 11th grade, meaning they will enter SAWA this Fall. Because of this, I spent more time addressing motivation and discussing the importance of applying the methods to increase motivation while in SAWA. I taught self-regulated learning, the importance of establishing and tailoring academic performance with three steps: planning, performing, and reflecting. These topics will enable the group of students to effectively prepare for the matriculation exam and also perform well on it.



Welid Omar (pictured here), a good friend of mine who is now a student at Mei Nefhi (Eritrea Institute of Technology) successfully completed SAWA and did extremely well on their matriculation exam. Welid capped off this workshop session by sharing his experience and providing crucial advice so that the Diaa high schoolers are better prepared to come out of SAWA with a shot at attending University.

2. Electricity - Solar Energy

When I came to Eritrea 8 years ago, electricity was scarce. Unsurprisingly, a market opened for intricate flashlights and other forms of self sufficient energy.

Unfortunately after 8 years, much hasn't changed.

Electricity continues to be one of the major problems impacting growth and stability here. Many homes and businesses lack the intricate offerings of generators or solar energy despite it being a solid one-time investment. The hefty price tag of solar energy points to a few reasons for why its inaccessibility, mainly the significant shabby purchasing power.

Understanding the potential in the solutions, I decided this was an area I wanted to impact. Thus, I went ahead and designated the largest portion of my budget to purchase 3 economy sized solar devices for homes in the more isolated villages of Adi Wattet/Amita and one premium solar panel/installation costs for a Ducan (small convenience shop) in the Akria area. The goal was to provide sustainable impact for a small business and homes.



On the bright side (pun unintended), there's been a huge shift towards solar energy as the popular reliable energy source for lighting and powering small devices, beating clunky generators. I think the trend is great and that this has been a positive growing investment/area of emphasis despite the involuntary circumstances.

Several brothers in Alpha Sigma of Chi Psi are involved in sustainable energy efforts and organizations, and I am eager to learn more on the topic and brainstorm ways to improve access in areas to efficient energy in areas such as Eritrea.

3. Design

The design and textile industry is an obvious mainstay of Eritrea's economy the people's skill set and interest along with the country's resources. Fashion in Eritrea is unique and is an aspect that has been in our roots for ages.

A significant and centerpiece of Eritrean design is the Zuria. The traditional dress originated from Ethiopian and Eritrean culture, which we call "zuriya" (in Tigrinya) or "hager lebs" (in Amharic). From the design of the waistline, sleeves, fabric, to the thick stripe of colored fabric at the hem, the zuriya and hager lebs is a beautiful representation of what fashion and culture means in the Horn.

Designing these zurias, dresses and other formalwear provides a robust source of income for many in Eritrea. I saw that it would be wise to make an impact in this area since I also really appreciate fashion/design and also see a lot of global potential in this sector. **Thus, I created a scholarship to offset tuition for 7 students attending an eight month course to receive a license in Tailoring and Handcraft.**



After sitting through the class, (that meets five days a week!) I was inspired by the student's range in age and enthusiasm for what they were working towards.

4. Access to water

It's the 21st century, meaning the supplying of water pipe and plumbing service is a basic social and economic right.

Yet the majority of homes in Asmara haven't received water this way for years because of issues such as leakage and low pressure from the water supply station. As a result, most residents find themselves lined up in the streets alongside clunky blue barrels used to store water provided by government tankers, who usually arrive twice a month.



Many homes conserve rainwater using these yellow gallon containers, accumulate it in their barrel and use the water for their daily use.

The tankers usually arrive later than scheduled, and once they arrive, they stop at designated stations in a neighborhood where homes leave barrels in a queued line, even leaving their children to guard the barrels.

The water that the government provides isn't even clean and usually contains high levels of saline, causing widespread health concerns among communities since many families use this water provided for drinking purposes despite warnings against doing so.

For drinking water, there are a number of areas that provide purified water gallons at steep prices aggregating travel, delivery and profit costs.

The problem has always been visible but it is currently even worse.

East Africa is currently experiencing the worst drought to hit the region in 60 years. Almost 20 million in the Horn are experiencing food and water shortages, acute malnutrition and mass displacement throughout the region.

I wanted to make an impact in achieving affordable and easier access to water for citizens.



So I went to a water purification center in the Akria area called Qasim mai. Here I was able to learn about the purification and distribution process of the water. I came away with the understanding that the largest impediment for those looking for clean water is having the means to transport such large quantities. So many small neighborhood shops (Ducans) get large trucks and do this where they mark the price for drinking water up astronomically.

I decided to purchase 60 gallons at the base price it was offered for at Qasim Mai and provided it at the main area for commerce in Akria for the price that I acquired it for, instead of charging the insane mark-up fees others do.

5. Research

Finally, I was able to complete research by interviewing people in entities such as the EITA (Eritrea Investment and Trade Agency), Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of National Finance.

Throughout my time in Asmara, I found time to write about segments of my project and our culture. If you're interested in learning more about the segments of my work and the culture of Eritrea, visit my blog.

Conclusion

I'm extremely grateful for the support of Chi Psi fraternity, both in alumni and our current brotherhood. I am excited to immerse myself back into the Lodge this Fall and use my experience to positively impact Chi Psi and the University.

My time in Asmara has allowed me to grow as an individual. I've been able to reflect and really look at my goals and consider what it is that I value in life, while learning the importance and the significance of education and opportunity. I left Eritrea with a sense of appreciation for all I'm fortunate to have in my life and a newfound sense of motivation to work with grit and determination in all my endeavors.

Summary of Expenses

Total Amount Awarded by Alpha Sigma Foundation: \$1575

Funds used toward Travel Expenses: \$900

Funds used for workshop and teaching resources: \$350

Funds used toward Laptop purchase: \$325