

This is a letter written by Awoke Genetu in response to an article in the New Republic Nov 17, 2014 by Michael Hobbes: Stop Trying to Save the World – Big ideas are destroying international development

Dear all,

December 2, 2014

Regarding the research why big projects are unsuccessful and some small local projects are successful such as Project Ethiopia; I would like to forward my suggestions.

1. I and Workineh are born and grew up where now Project Ethiopia is situated. Having a back ground of modern education and after learning differences of the living standards of people at different parts of the world, we easily learned how back ward the living condition of our community is.

Therefore, when we meet Judith and Dennis who can raise money to improve such back ward living standards; I and my brother committed to give all our time and energy to the success of the projects from our side.

We always enjoy when we call each other and discuss about our projects. Having a close ties with the villagers, we also easily mobilize the community for volunteer labor. This was true when we dug trenches for pipelines, when we plaster mud and straw for schools...

People from big projects may not have such dedication to their projects and can't create a close ties as such to create community trust to mobilize community labor. They are employees and they may come for field work from distance places and their attachment to the locals may become minimal.

2. Project Ethiopia carries a clear mission. It is to alleviate poverty and to help children to have access for education. We have no a hidden agenda. Some NGOs (Non Government Organizations) carry another mission. What they stated in their agenda is a cover.

Our people were suspicious when we go to the villages with our projects. They checked and re-checked before supporting us. Some

NGOs encourage people to accept new faith in order to give them support they provide. This may offend the some portion of the community and the NGO may face resistance and it may end up in failure. People may need any form of help but it shouldn't be at the expense something.

Project Ethiopia is dedicated to respect the age old tradition and religion of the country. In the schools we built, students from Muslim and Ethiopian Orthodox background are attending together. Therefore, there is no favoritism.

3. Mutual trust from both sides: Judith and Dennis who raise the money trust us and send us the money directly and we in turn collect receipts and send it back in order to get the next transfer. This is very short means compare to long bureaucratic channels to release funds for big NGOs.

4. The objectives of the managers: Judith, Dennis and Paul cover all travel and administration expenses by themselves. They are not highly paid bosses like the managers of other NGOs. Many people wish to join some NGOs as a manager because of their high pay. The managers' focus will become to create more money by organizing a series of conferences, meetings... and this contributes more for overhead cost. This in turn will make them less effective in ground works and many projects may fail.

5. Use of local sources and training of local people: When we think of new ideas, equally we are thinking to train the locals. Our project workers do every maintenance work. Maintenance is very important to keep the project works to last long and to add the new ones. In the big NGOs, they set up projects without training the locals. After they leave the area, no one can fix things and many things can be damaged and end up useless.

By using our trained project workers, we fixed many hand pump wells for many villages which were built by another NGOs.

Thank you so much,

Awoke Genetu