



Case study: Turning a village around

KORARO, Ethiopia (CNN) -- Koraro, in northern Ethiopia, is isolated, underdeveloped and desperately poor.

Four months ago, it was chosen as a test case by the United Nations to implement new methods to pull its people out of extreme poverty within five years.

The plan, spearheaded by the economist Jeffrey Sachs, calls for the participation of foreign donors, the Ethiopian government and the residents of Koraro.

Koraro, with a population of 5,000, is located about 16 km from a secondary dry weather road and about 54 km from the main road. Its residents suffer from chronic diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and respiratory diseases.

It has only one rainy season, which usually begins on June 28 and ends on September 4 of every average year. It has experienced a shortage of rain in most of the last 10 years.

CNN's Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour traveled to Koraro as part of CNN's Africa at Risk coverage, to learn more about the project.

She spoke to Erin Trowbridge, of the U.N. Millennium Project, who set out the priorities for the village.

"Water is the make or break here," Trowbridge said.

"People are starving and people are thirsty. We began work here about four months ago, walked into the village and knew that we have to get them water. And we have to get them food. So this is the critical first entry point.

"We're teaching them harvesting so that they can collect rainwater that they can use for their crops, they can use for washing. But if they don't have water to drink, they will not live.

"Water exists underground all the time everywhere. You give them a deep pipe that runs down into a borough with a pump so that they're not down in the holes waiting for hours for a little trickle of water that's going to come naturally.

"You give them all access all the time with a hand pump."

"It's not difficult. It's not difficult. It takes very little money. It takes having a few engineers coming out figuring out the best water points to service the most amounts of people. It takes two days of an engineer's time and about two days to build.

Major health problems in the village include acute respiratory diseases and malaria. The Tala village -- one of three making up Koraro -- has been stricken by malaria epidemics. The closest hospital is at Wukro town, 54 km away.

Trowbridge said that simply by introducing insecticide treated malaria bed nets could cut the risk of malaria by about 80 percent.

"So we bring in the next 10 days a whole shipment of malaria bed nets. Every family gets a bed net. Every family then is encouraged to have all of their children sleeping under a bed net. The fact is with malaria, the most insidious thing about the disease is that the children are most vulnerable -- especially children under five.

"You talk to the mother. You talk to the father. You show them how to use it. You show them how to close it tight. If it's long lasting, it's good for them for five years. For five years children can sleep under the bed net and at night will not be bitten by mosquitoes.

"These people are smart. Look at them. They know that they need water. They know that they need better soil fertilizers. They know that they need bed nets, so we come in, we spend the first time really working with the people to work with the existing committees to know what they need.

"They need to own this process. If the process is imposed on them, it doesn't work. It doesn't work at all. This is their process. They drive this. They tell us. We work with them. So we've been here. We've been talking with them, working with them to identify their needs and their priorities and now we start."

Koraro has been allocated \$250,000 a year for the next five years to turn itself around.

Trowbridge said the money would buy trucks, build bore wells, bring in hand pumps and distribute bed nets.

"It's the core money that is needed to bring in all the pieces that will change their world," she added.

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