

THE HAMELMALO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY; AN INDIGENOUS SOLUTION TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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The Hamelmalo agricultural college environmental society (HACES) is a college based organization founded to facilitate the establishment of vital development projects in predominantly rural, disadvantaged communities throughout Eritrea.

HACES plays a facilitative role in the process, enabling local communities and neighborhoods who chose to do so, to identify, plan and implement the socio-economic and environmental projects they most need in a democratic manner. This 'bottom-up' participatory approach delivers not only projects but training. Communities therefore receive the tools to create their own autonomous projects in the future - the essential goal of sustainable human development.

HACES's organic agricultural project spans the entire development process from nursery to market. Among other things this includes the securing of product organic certification, from which farmers receive direct income benefits; utilizing biomass waste to create further products such as clean energy briquettes and reinvesting in agricultural and human development projects.

HACES takes care at every level to prioritize the most marginalized. This pervading ethos of inclusivity was very much in evidence on its projects. There are hundreds of people across Eritrea who can speak of their first time planting a tree under the HACES auspices. The initiative represents different strata of Eritrean society, from national and provincial dignitaries to agricultural workers, from teachers to schoolchildren - the next generation to take care of our earth and find sustainable methods of conducting our lives. The choice reflects very well our role, demonstrated in innumerable activities, to connect the as-yet-unconnected to opportunities for growth and development: to economic and communal participation, to clean drinking water, to education - and to each other.

Projects then are seen as gateways to further initiatives, deeper meaning, broader impact and the delivery of vital messages to the global public. We must - and will - continue to deliver with continued passion and commitment, dedication and precision, with faith in the Eritrean people and in humanity.

Setting the stage for the rest of the planting season; at a time when the a country is threatened with drought, much-needed rain began to fall at many locations - a most promising sign for the health of the trees and local agriculture and, one likes to think, for the future in general.

Bringing the idea to fruition has, and will continue to be, an exercise in enhancing and affirming life, in terms of its impact on the environment and on society. Worthy of note in this context are two unique features; the opportunities afforded to the foundation

and the spirit of cooperation existing between diverse communities within and beyond Eritrea.

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