

REST: Famed footballer pays prolific visit to Tigray

G/haweria Birhane REST-PR

One of the legendary football players of the world, Neven Subotic Stiftung, who plays for Borussia Dortmund club as defender, came to the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) to visit rural water supply projects funded by his own foundation Neven Subotic Stiftung in collaboration with American based Charity: Water. Neven met the executive director of REST, Mr. Teklewoini Assefa and had fruitful discussion about his future charity aids.

From June 4 to 20, 2015 Neven Subotic with his professional film crew (videographers and photographers) was in Tigray regional state visiting the water projects constructed in different villages of the region. Most of the shallow boreholes clean water supply projects are constructed at primary schools to nearly serve the school community especially students. Before the water projects constructed at schools, students suffered from numerous water born diseases like amoeba, bilharzias and diarrhea.

Moreover, in all water schemes, there are also dry latrines which have been constructing (some of them are completed) with the same financial support of Neven Subotic Foundation in collaboration with Charity: Water implemented by REST. The design of these latrines gave safe privacy for both sexes while looking for private uses. Both the water wells and latrines helped students and teachers to fetch potable water and provided a safe place for defecation in their school compounds. In this trip, Neven visited fourteen water projects and latrines; four from eastern zone, four in central zone, three in north western zone, two in



southern zone and one in south eastern zone of Tigray regional state. Out of these all water projects, two were visited during live machine drilling. The remaining are completed and productive water projects serving thousands of individuals.

Debretawr primary school is found in north western Tigray, some 20km driving from the town of Sheraro, in the place called Adi Aser. A year ago, the school had new completed shallow borehole and latrines for female and male constructed by REST with the support of Neven Subotic foundation. Since then, students enjoyed clean water supply as well as standard toilets in their school compound. As a result of this and other quality education measures, enrolment status of the school increased by 30% as the school principal told the team. Similarly encouraging impacts were observed in all visited project areas.



Neven's meeting with REST management

Mr. Subotic stayed in the field more than two weeks trekking from site to site, moving from village to village, driving from wereda to wereda, from town to town in order to came up with proven observation for his back supporters in Germany and Europe as a whole. While he met management members from REST, he makes



sure that REST has been implementing promising water supply projects in the remote areas. He raised the case that programs he had visited in other countries had failed in post implementation

and monitoring systems, but REST is better in water management systems, maintenance cases, project quality and close follow ups. About his entire field trip reflection to REST water projects, he said “it was a wonder full trip. We [the Neven Subotic Foundation team] come to check up the project we funded in collaboration with Charity: Water and implemented by REST. Any one wants to know the people of Tigray. Because, for us it is the biggest motivation to continue the support in water hygiene and sanitation (WASH) project to address clean water to the rural community of Tigray. Most of our shallow boreholes they provide clean and safe water to the rural community and in schools latrine and clean water supply. We have got positive feedbacks from the people of Tigray. We are happy for the feedback and we continue the project.”

Press conference

Many Ethiopian journalists were highly eager to meet Neven. Especially those who knew him on television from distant side of the world were keen to interview him in person. Some of them still preferred to browse internet to recognize his personality, character, choice and so on. Eventually, he was positive to deliver the pretty press conference at REST head office, press conference hall, to all local and national media. The journalists, most of them sport journalists in their job description, were prepared many open ended questions and asked him following his briefings all about his entire field trip. He was focused in the humanitarian aspect than soccer. On the contrary, the journalists were more aware about his football tactics as defender for the German Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund. In his broad response to numerous queries Neven says “other famous players like me, spent their vacation in different ways, but me spent here in Tigray with Tigryan people, by showing, talking and providing clean safe water for the rural community and school community. It is great chance. We continue WASH projects. Now, I feel sad to turn to Germany since I caught me with the different stories from the students in Tigray.



I came to Ethiopia last year for the first time but I know it with its great runner, I want to visit it and today we are here for the second time in Tigray. The people of Tigray is more generous, they give us from what they have it is up to chicken. I have never seen like this in Germany. I extremely thanks to the people of Tigray.”

From all completed and under construction water projects, Neven frequently develops success stories helping by REST translator in order to publish in Germany famous news papers for his upcoming fund raising purpose. Moreover, videographers filmed the successes as the photographers also were focused in shooting best scenes for the same mission. Regarding to the WASH projects status he told “my projects on WASH have progress from time to time. Many of them completed. Hope fully, for the next, they will be serving for the community who are in need of clean water and latrines.”

Visit to sport clubs

In addition to his two weeks long field trip to all water project sites and latrines of REST in remote villages, Neven paid visit to Welwalo and Mekelle Kenema sport clubs respectively. He had professional discussions with both coaches at Adigrat and Mekelle. He visited Welwalo squad while playing at Adigrat stadium. He was planned to see



Mekelle Kenema club in training time at Tigray national stadium, but time matters. Instead he then trekked to their office located at kebele 16, around Alula Abanega hotel. Within few minutes, he shared his experience for the club members. Neven finally paid again quick round trip to Tigray stadium. He was completely allured with the building status of Tigray national stadium and he wants to have some pictures of it for memory.