

# a project share story

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It's time to give back

## A Drop in the Ocean: Mission *Almost* Impossible



Jabir Abdul Malik

Slightly smaller than Texas, Somalia is located on Africa's east coast and bordered by Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Somalia's population is 9.9 million, with a life expectancy of only 48.5 years for males, and that's *without* hemophilia. Somalia's capital is Mogadishu, home of six-year-old Jabir, who has hemophilia A.

Halfway across the world, in San Diego, lives Jabir's uncle Abdirisack. A refugee from Somalia, Abdirisack was receiving help from the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which contracts with the US State Department to assist refugees in their transition here.

"Abdirisack came to our immigration department to petition his nephew Jabir to come to the United States for medical help," says Jamie Robertson of AmeriCorps VISTA at the IRC. Jabir's doctor, Mohamud Zahid, knew that Jabir had a

bleeding disorder, but felt he needed more extensive tests performed outside of Somalia. "Unfortunately," explains Robertson, "we had to tell Abdirisack that there was no way to petition his nephew through the US immigration processes."

Abdirisack had been in the US for only a year; he was unemployed and unable to pursue other options for Jabir. So the IRC decided to focus on getting aid to Somalia for Jabir. "I contacted hemophilia associations in California and larger global organizations that focus on hemophilia patients and treatment," says Robertson, "as well as hematologists in Eastern Africa and the World Health Organization. It was at that point that I found Project SHARE."

In March 2011, Robertson contacted Project SHARE. She explained that Jabir's bleeding disorder was discovered

after he was circumcised at age four, but his family has been unable to obtain factor for the past two years.

Project SHARE worked closely with Jabir's uncle Abdirisack, to determine how best to get factor to Jabir. Because it's impossible to send factor to Somalia directly, there were many challenges: the language barrier, gaining access to Jabir's medical records, and finding a way to ship the factor.

Then we learned that Abdirisack has a sister living in Kenya. Luckily, Project SHARE donates regularly to Kenya through the Jose Memorial Haemophilia Society (JMHS). With help from Paul Kamau and Maureen Miruka, JMHS president, we were able to donate factor for Jabir. The next week, Jabir's aunt, Sucaad Adan Abdirahman, registered with JMHS so she could transport factor to her nephew.

"I was so excited when I finally found Project SHARE," recalls Robertson. "The work they do is incredible, and it was such a relief to know that this group truly cared about this one little boy from Somalia and had the resources to help him."

Today, Jabir is doing well. Without the help of a small group of caring people from San Diego, Boston, Kenya, and Somalia, working together with one common goal, helping Jabir would not have been possible. @



Jabir's aunt Sucaad Adan Abdirahman with Paul Kamau of JMHS, Kenya



Jabir's uncle Abdirisack

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