



## Mulu Berhan– Tigray Region

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**Child/adult** [Mulu Berhan, 26, Female, Dongolat village, Basic Education, Literacy Boost]

**Themes** [Basic education, ECCD]

**Related interviews** [N/A]

### Summary

Mulu Berhan, 26, is a teacher and acting school principal at Dongolat first cycle elementary school in Dongolat village, of the Tigray region. Mulu has been teaching in this school for the last four years. Save the Children has constructed and furnished a school in the nearby village where more than 642 school children are currently attending their education from grade 0-4 out of which 342 are girls. Before the construction of the school in Dongolat village many children used to travel on foot everyday to very faraway places in order to get an education.

While more children are in school today than ever before, many are not learning basic skills like reading once they get there. Save the Children's Literacy Boost program in Tigray is helping to change that by providing training to primary school teachers, providing teaching aids, constructing schools and furnishing them. With the training given to teachers, they were able to develop new skills and techniques on helping children learn more letters, read more words and sentences and understand their meaning.

### Mulu's story in her own words

My name is Mulu Berhan. I graduated as primary school teacher from Adwa teachers training institute in 2006. I have more than eight years teaching experience at different schools including Dongolat first cycle elementary school. Currently I teach mathematics, English, aesthetics, music and Amharic subjects to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at Dongolat first cycle primary school that was built and furnished by Save the Children.

During this academic year, we enrolled a total of 642 school children from grades 1-4 out of which 342 are girls. The school operates in two shifts; one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

We faced a lot of problems before Save the Children's literacy boost program started here in this school. Most children couldn't read and understand words properly. The school teachers also lacked the required skills and knowledge to help children learn to read and comprehend words. As part of Save the Children literacy boost program we were provided training in Mekele town and with the knowledge and skill that I received from the training, I was able to help students learn to read and understand words. Compared to the past, there is a huge improvement on the children's reading ability and the comprehension of the sentences they read. The training also helped me build my confidence in teaching and I personally have changed a lot. All in all, the training has enabled us to get the techniques and skills required to keep students engaged. We are also able to make them interested in reading books by using games, songs and stories.



Currently, more children are coming to school compared to before. I wish the literacy program could reach to other schools, especially to those areas that are hard to reach. These days the awareness of most of the community about the importance of education has significantly increased. As a result, many children are in school today than ever before. The local community members in Dongolat village have contributed more than 600,000 birr (\$ USD 30,000) and through this contribution, the construction of additional classrooms are underway.

These days, even though more children are enrolled in school than ever before, the fact remains that significant number of children with disabilities are still out of school. Currently, there are two children with hearing loss in my class that I support to learn to read and understand words. But I didn't received any training before on how to handle children with disabilities and don't know how best to support them. I hope Save the Children in collaboration with the government will address this problem by providing training to teachers and supporting the school with school materials that help children with special needs to get access to education.

**Interview conducted by Seifu Assegid and Amerti Lemma, during a recent communication assignment to Tigray region in [December, 2013]**

## **Location and background**

Tigray is located in the northern part of Ethiopia. It is home to a total population of 4.3 million, of which about 51% are female. The estimated population of children between 5 and 9 years is 1,752,374 (868,052 female), those between 1 and 4 years old are 511,210 (251,414 females), and children under one year are estimated at 118,307 (58,532 females). Among the 46 districts/ woredas Save the Children reaches only five. Hintalo Wajirat is one of the districts that Save the Children has long been implementing its educational program. Maicheka and Shimena villages are located in this district. Majority of the population is reported to be directly dependent on rain fed agriculture and dry land farming as a livelihood means.

As a result, Tigray region is characterized by dry climatic condition, severe natural resources (land, water and vegetation) degradation and cyclical droughts. Traditional farming practices and inadequate involvement of women in all aspects of development compounded with the above factors have significantly affected the performance of the regions' agricultural production and productivity. Consequently, numerous rural households have been subjected to chronic food deficit failing to feed their family in general, their small children in particular throughout a year and over years.

Tigray region has long been among the major war zone of the country during the civil war which lasted nearly two decades and claimed many lives. The area has been impacted heavily by the war and is most remembered by the drought that affected many livelihoods in the area. Because of the war many schools have been destroyed and children were forced to drop out of school. This has influenced the access to education and leaving the region to be among the least developed regions of Ethiopia.

## **Project background**

Since 2006, Save the Children through its Basic Education project has constructed more than 46 primary schools and 12 Early Childhood Care and Development Centres and 72 intervention schools for SHN in Tigray Region of Ethiopia. So far the project has benefited more than 36,500 children. **Save the Children** is working with **the** Ethiopian Government to improve **the** quality of education through construction of schools, provision of in service training for teachers, capacity building of community representatives, woreda expertise and supply of books and vital equipment to educational institutions.



**Save the Children**

## Ethiopia personal story

Save the Children Basic education integrated with Food Security project provides economic support to those families who are food insecure which enables them to send their children to school.