



## **Abeba Tesfay – Tigray Region**

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**Child/adult** [Abeba Tesfay, 37, Female, Maicheka village, Basic Education, ECCD]

**Themes** [Education]

**Photo references** [picture ref numbers]

**Related interviews** [N/A]

### **Summary**

Abeba Tesfay mother of six children is 37 years old. She lives in Maicheka village in Tigray region of Ethiopia with her five boys. All of her five boys are currently enrolled in Maicheka primary school whereas the oldest son goes to Mekele to attend his high school education. A single mother divorced with her husband a few years ago, she struggles to send them all to school on her own. She farms and rears livestock to support her children to continue their education. Save the Children has built and furnished the Maicheka primary school that currently enrolls more than 250 students in the area. Save the Children also provides training to teachers and the community about the importance of education, teaching methodologies and School Health and Nutrition (SHN).

### **Abeba's story in her own words**

I am divorced and currently a single mom raising six boys all by myself in Maichekat village. I send all of my children to Maicheka complete primary school except my oldest son which goes to Mekele town where he attends his high school education. Maicheka primary school is a five minute walk for the children from our home.

I take care of my farm with the support from my children. At times when it's not possible, I hire daily laborers to work on our farm. We also have animals; 5 sheep, 3 goats, one ox. With the ox that I have, I plough my land and grow wheat, barley and teff to support the family.

Life is difficult for women especially single mothers. I don't want my children to blame me for not being able to complete their education which is the main contributor to a better life. I want them to get the opportunity that I didn't get in my past life. And in order to see this happen I will do all my best including selling all my assets to send them all to school. I want them to be doctors and teachers and generally successful in their future careers. I want them to be able to support themselves but be successful enough to support me and the general community.

Early marriage was a common practice in Maichekat before this school was constructed. However, currently people don't think about marrying off their children. Instead they want them all to go to school and lead a better life by completing their education. For example, being a woman in this village could have many challenges. With life expenses being high, responsibility in the housework is being delegated to women. Girls are now looking forward to completing their education and going to the cities to lead a better life than staying here.



**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 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.