



## Essa Faraga– Afar Region

**Child Themes** Itelyn Yous [female, 10 months], Elidaar Woreda [district], Emergency Nutrition program in Afar [Emergency Nutrition Response, Stabilization Centre]

**Related interviews** N/A

**Summary** Essa Faraga, 21, has four children including Itelyn Yous (10 months). They live in a harsh environment, in a district called Elidaar in the Afar Region. Itelyn was severely malnourished and brought to the stabilization centre (SC) for treatment. The SC is one of the centres established in Afar and administered by Save the Children. In April, Save the Children supported the regional government to conduct a mass screening of children under five and pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Twenty-seven percent of children and 33% of women were found to be acutely malnourished. Following this declaration of emergency by the local government, Save the Children immediately responded by pulling its resources and staff to help children like Itelyn, who has now been stabilized and is ready for release after her five-day stay in the Elidaar centre.

### Essa's story in her own words

My name is Essa Faraga. I used to live in Siyaru Village found in the foothills of a mountain close to the Eritrean border which is far worse than what we find here in Elidaar Woreda. It's very arid and harsh climate even for an adults, let alone children. I don't think we will ever return back to that place.

My daughter Itelyn Yous and I came to Elidaar stabilization centre five days ago and have received a lot of support from health professionals, as Itelyn was severely malnourished. I have four other children that are staying at home with my father and that need my support. I am 21 years old and my husband doesn't live with me. He travels around the Afar Region for work. My children and I stay with my parents as they are the only support we get aside from the government and clinics like the Elidaar health centre.

Itelyn had a lot of stomach problems before we came here. She now takes the milk (F75) that they gave me from the clinic and also breastfeeds. Although she is 10 months old I don't give her any additional food.

The health worker at the health centre close to where we used to live referred me to this centre. Getting here was not easy. As we travel in groups we had to wait for everyone in order to get here. Itelyn is much healthier than when we first came. She plays and is much more active than her usual self.

Water is very scarce and we have to travel a long way to get it. We eat mufe (corn flour which is mixed and put in the ground to bake with fire before we eat it). If we ever get milk from either goats or camels, we mix the mufe with it and feed our children. This is not something that we do now. We sometimes don't even have corn.

We feel like we have no hope for the future. We're always dependent on people and organizations that give us support. We really don't have much to look forward to.

**Interview conducted by Amerti Lemma during the recent communication assignment to Afar region in June, 2013**



## Project background

The two main rainy seasons in Afar are Karma and Sugum. Early cessation of the regular Karma (long) rains in late 2012 and disruption of Sugum (short) rains in March/April 2013 resulted in critical water shortage, very poor pasture, low livestock and agricultural production and irregular migration, severely affecting the food security and livelihood status of the communities. The major affected areas are in Zones One and Two which are located in the northern and north-eastern parts of the region. Five woredas (Afdera, Erebti, Kori, Bidu and Elidaar) have been prioritised by the regional government as suffering from critical water shortage and food insecurity. Save the Children have on-going programmes in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), livelihoods, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), nutrition, health and education in Afar.

An emergency nutrition programme funded by HRF started in April, 2013 in six hotspot woredas. OTP is delivered in conjunction with government health workers and Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP) is delivered directly by Save the Children. So far 1,204 severely malnourished children have been admitted to OTP sites and 40 cases transferred to the stabilization centres and received treatment. A total of 4,325 moderately malnourished children and 4,428 PLWs have been admitted to the SFP.

Drought has become a frequent and persistent phenomenon in the Afar Region causing serious impairments in livestock production, the main source of livelihoods for pastoralists. In the past 10 years the region has been hit by three severe droughts — in 2002/03, in 2004/05, in 2007 and now this latest drought. Many fear that this will continue to further deteriorate the condition of the Afar people and worsen their abilities to recover from these continuous shocks. The situation requires a large-scale response within the next three months to overcome and prevent further immediate casualties in terms of both human and livestock lives. The Afar Region requires long-term investment to reduce the impact of further droughts and provide sustainable water resources to communities. Save the Children has responded to this crisis by providing water trucking to the affected regions over the last month, and aims to do so until August when it is hoped the rains will come. Save the Children is also working with partners such as UNICEF to support the sustainable development of water resources in this area, and reduce communities' dependence on trucked water.

## Location Background

Afar region, situated in the North Eastern part of Ethiopia with a population of 1.4m, is a drought prone area which suffers from chronic water shortages. The majority of Afar people are pastoralists (90%) or agro-pastoralists (10%) who rely on livestock rearing and rain fed agriculture for their diet and livelihoods.

Basic service provision in the pastoral areas of Ethiopia has historically been problematic, with less than one-fifth of pastoral communities in Ethiopia having access to basic social services such as health care and education; Afar is no exception. In Afar, there are shortages of trained health staff at all levels as well as a basic lack of infrastructure — the fact that there are only 39 health centres and 4 referral hospitals in the whole region (96,707 square kilometres) means families have to cover vast distances by foot to reach lifesaving care.