



## Fatuma Wase– Afar Region

**Child Themes** **Fatuma Wase** [female, 11 yrs], Elidaar woreda [district], Emergency Nutrition program in Afar [WASH, Drought]

**Related interviews** N/A

**Summary** The only girl among her four younger brothers, Fatuma is in grade two at Buldgum (Wuha Limat) elementary school in Afar Region. Water has been a scarce resource in the community including the school. The last time the school received water trucking in their baska [water harvesting structure] was a month ago. Because of the shortage of water in the area, most children are discouraged to come to school and do not attend regularly. Many students like Fatuma are obliged to assist their families to fetch water from distant places which interfere and highly impact their school attendance. Many school-aged children are also seen on the side of the busy highways of Afar connecting Ethiopia to Djibouti asking for bottles of water from drivers that pass by. As a result, many children are highly exposed to car accidents.

Currently, Save the Children is running water trucking programs in the hot-spot woredas [districts] that have been identified by the regional government. Priority is given to children in schools and so far we have provided 1,566 cubic meters of water has been distributed to 570 households which is estimated to be 3,420 people in Afar Region.

## Fatuma's story in her own words

My name is Fatuma Wase. I'm 11 years old and in second grade in Buldgum elementary school located at Wuha Limat Village in the Afar Region. My favourite class is Amharic because I have high interest in learning the language. It's my ultimate dream to be in the medical field and would love to be a nurse when I grow up.

I live with my parents and four other brothers (Mohammed, ten; Ise, six; Ali, four; and Aden, two). I'm the only girl. Ise and Mohammed go to an Alternative Basic Education centre (ABEC). The others don't attend school. My brothers usually herd the goats and I cook around the house. I usually make an Afar staple food called mufe made out of corn flour which is mixed with water and baked in the ground with fire.

My dad is a daily labourer and carries rocks for the dam that is being built near where we live. We have two camels and 15 goats. There is no grazing land for our animals and so they don't produce milk. We usually get to drink water when it rains. I sometimes try to bring water in a bottle to drink for the trip to school which takes me close to one hour one way under the hot sun. I usually get thirsty. I've gotten used to it. We fetch water from a really far distance and it's my parents who usually go fetch water. We use our camels to carry the water for us.

The baska here at the school isn't usually full nor reliable and it has been empty for the last three months. Although the harsh climate makes it difficult to attend school, I am committed to finish my education and make my dreams come true.

**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, Erebt, 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.