



Hassen Ibrahim– Afar Region

Themes [Emergency Nutrition Response, Stabilization Centre (SC)]

Summary Hassen Ibrahim is a clinical nurse by profession working in the under five clinic in the Elidaar health centre in Afar region. He has been recently trained by Save the Children on Outpatient Therapeutic Program (OTP) and SC treatment protocol. He has been assigned as a stabilization centre head for the last two months for the current emergency response program run by Save the Children. Hassen's main responsibility is to assess, diagnose and treat children with severely acute malnutrition and medical complications who are referred by the 13 OTP sites under Elidaar health centre within the Afar region. In addition to his responsibility to run the SC centre he is engaged in providing immunization to children under-five at a facility and outreach levels.

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 suffering from malnutrition.

Hassen's story in his own words

My name is Hassen Ali. I graduated as clinical nurse from Axum Nursing College in 2011. Currently, I am working in the under-five outpatient department (OPD) at Elidaar district health centre. I have been working here for the last four months. In the under-five clinic, we give services such as immunization, diagnosis and treatment to under-five children with common childhood illnesses, including malnutrition.

Compared to before, this time the number of children coming to the clinic with severe malnutrition has increased. This is mainly because of the recent drought in the area. Before, we only treated a few children with moderate malnutrition, but now most children who come to the clinic have severe malnutrition.

These days, because of the change in climate and lack of enough rain in the area, the community here has been suffering due to drought and shortage of water. Those pastoralist communities who live near to the border with Eritrea are the one who have been badly affected by the drought. They don't have access to water supply and they live in areas that are inaccessible, making it difficult to get support.

Most communities in Afar Region are pastoralists and they are largely dependent on livestock rearing. However, because of the recurrent drought and lack of rain in the area most communities have lost their animals and were unable to get enough to feed their children. Because of the dispersed settlement of the local communities and the unique way of life of the people here, it is very difficult to deliver basic services such as health, education and water supply. As a result, they face many challenges.

I am very saddened to see children suffering from severe malnutrition. For example, when a child named Mohamed Hussein first came to our clinic he had developed bed sore and was unable to easily move his body. He was suffering of the bed sore he developed. But now after receiving treatment he has recovered and is doing well. I am satisfied to see children leaving the health centre recovered from their illness.



I was given training by Save the Children on OTP and SC protocols at Dechoto Town for five days. The training has helped me improve my knowledge and skills to assess and treat children with malnutrition. The training has also refreshed my memory of what I learned from nursing school on how to take vital signs, which is the key to identifying illnesses in children. I am very grateful to Save the Children for their closest support to us that improves our work.

Interview conducted by Seifu Assegid 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.



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Ethiopia personal story