



## **Kinfu Yitbarek – Tigray**

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**Child/adult** [Kinfu Yitbarek, 45, Male, Maicheka village, Basic Education, Early Childhood Care and Development ECCD]

**Themes** [Education]

**Photo references** [picture ref numbers]

**Related interviews** [N/A]

### **Summary**

Kinfu Yitbarek father of five children, four boys and one girl lives in a small rural village called Maicheka in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. All of his children are enrolled in school in the nearby villages as well as in Mekele (capital of Tigray region) which is 40 kms away from where they live. The school in Maichekat was built and furnished with the support of Save the Children and currently enrolls more than 250 students from grade 1-8. Before the construction of this school many of the community members were forced to send their children to faraway schools to attend their education. As a result, most children would be staying away from their families for long periods of time. This had an impact on children being able to complete their education especially girls and those who could not afford to send them to other locations due to associated costs.

### **Kinfu's story in his own words**

I am a 45 year old man and married with five children. All of my children go to school. Farming is our main source of income for our household. I mainly grow wheat, teff and barley. This year production is low mainly because of the small amount of rainfall we have received. In addition to farming, I support my family by doing additional daily labor work in the nearby villages. I have two oxen, one cow, two sheep and a donkey which are my main assets in life. If the situation doesn't improve I may be forced to sell my livestock in order to send my children to school and feed the family.

My first child is tenth grade and goes to Dongolat high school which is two hours away from Maichekat village. Until fourth grade he went to Dansa that was one hour away. Again from fifth grade to eighth grade he attended middle school in Melbe that is approximately one and a half hour walk from our village. This was very tiresome for him but also dangerous. We used to worry about his safety. There used to be danger of hyena attacks in the area. Having to switch so many schools was a result of the unavailability of schools like Maichekat.

All my other children are now going to Maichekat elementary school. My youngest child who is four years old goes to the ECCD centre at this same school. Instead of staying at home in an unsafe environment which is dusty and unhealthy for a child's growth, the ECCD centre provides positive changes in children's lives while providing choices such as educational indoor games, rest areas and safe outdoor playground.

Due to the distance being cut short, children are now able to use their time to study instead of commuting far



away schools. Ten minutes versus One and a half hour has a big difference.

Our major problem now is electricity. Currently our children use (kerosene lamp) to study at night. This is ineffective as they will be unable to share it equally among siblings in one home. It is also unhealthy and highly risky causing fire accidents. For example, a neighbor's child recently had a fire accident while studying at night. She was hospitalized at Dongolat health centre to treat her wounds.

Because of the long war in the area we have not had the chance to go to school which has contributed to the difference in living standards with those that had the chance to education. As for myself, I only attended school until the first grade and dropped out to join the war. As a consequence of my past experience I have put high value for education and want all of my children to complete their education and become better citizens in their future life. I am very thankful for the opportunity that Save the Children has provided for my children and the community in Maichekat.

**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.