

\* **Program Element:** Health/Nutrition

\* **Key Issues:** Nutrition-sensitive agriculture

### **AIDS Widower Now Able to Feed and Educate her 8 Children**

After her husband died of HIV/AIDS, Shewawork Neji of Gassa Wude village in Enemor woreda of SNNPR did not know how she was going to feed her 8 children who were living on her brother's property. The 15 chickens of local breed she raised, unreliably produced only a handful of eggs which her children consumed without satiety so she relied on feeding the children kocho (false banana) with chili. Shewawork's only means of earning a living was selling false banana. Unable to pay for school supplies, none of her children attended school.

In February 2012, when Shewawork's youngest child, Ezedin Abdulhadid, was just 5 months old, the USAID-funded Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE) project restocked her chicken flock with 12 vaccinated chickens of an improved breed and assisted her in planting a homestead vegetable garden. Shewawork learned to mix ingredients to make a homemade chicken feed and other management techniques to support her chickens when egg-laying production is low.

Homestead gardening introduced new vegetables such as carrot, Swiss chard, tomato, onions, cabbage and green beans to the household diet, which ENGINE taught her how to prepare into meals. Shewawork and her children describe these recipes as delicious. "I feel happy waking up when I know I can feed my children," she says.



Shewawork and her youngest child Ezedin now three years old

Now in her second round of chickens, Shewawork has more than doubled her flock. Harvesting 8 eggs per day, half of which her children consume and the other is sold in the community, Shewawork saves money for chicken feed during the rainy season through a community savings group of ENGINE beneficiaries. After a year of saving 10 Birr per month, she was able to pay the entrance fee to the Omo Microfinance Institution, qualifying her to receive a loan of 5,000 Birr. Shewawork plans to double her income by using a loan to purchase coffee, wheat and other nonperishable items during the productive season and then selling them during the rainy season when prices increase. Eventually, she plans to open a village store.

Thanks to USAID-funded projects like ENGINE that provide new skills and resources that empower rural mothers, most vulnerable households like Shewawork are able to provide their children with healthy food and become financially independent.

“My children were poorly nourished because I did not know how to feed them. After ENGINE, everything changed. My children’s thinking capacities improved. All of them but the 3 year old are in school now.”

Save the Children is leading the implementation of ENGINE – USAID’s flagship multi-sector nutrition project, which aims to improve the nutritional status of Ethiopian women and children through sustainable, coordinated, and evidence-based interventions, enabling them to lead healthier and more productive lives.

The core initiative of this large-scale, five-year project (2011-2016) is to prevent under-nutrition during the first 1,000 days by focusing on social behavior change, including linkages to livelihood and economic opportunities.

ENGINE builds upon the Government of Ethiopia’s initiatives and renewed commitment to nutrition as well as the U.S. Government’s Global Health and Feed the Future initiatives.

ENGINE is implemented in 83 productive woredas in four regions of Ethiopia: Amhara, Tigray, SNNPR, and Oromia. ENGINE will benefit 3.1 million under-five children, half a million pregnant and lactating women, 3.2 million women of reproductive age, and 2.7 million households.

ENGINE is carried out by a consortium of organizations, with Save the Children as the prime in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and their decentralized health and agriculture systems. ENGINE works with universities, regional colleges, Feed the Future and health partners, and the Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute.

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