

Story of Change – Abeba’s family, Ethiopia



Photo: Thomas Omondi

At a glance

Most Ethiopians live in rural areas, where levels of hunger and malnutrition are very high. Droughts and food emergencies are frequent.

SCIAF partner in Tigray

ADCS (Adigrat Diocesan Catholic Secretariat)

Solution

- Rain water reservoir tank
- Concrete irrigation canals
- Agricultural training
- Business skills

Outcome

Families that used to eat one meal a day, are now able to eat 2-3 times a day, crops are better irrigated and families grow a wider variety of crops. There is more food to eat, and extra to sell to provide an income.

Introduction

In the local language Abeba means “flower”. Ethiopia’s capital city is called Addis Abeba, which means “new flower”. However Abeba and her family live very far from the busy city of Addis Abeba, in a remote valley called Biera, in the Tigray region in the north of Ethiopia. Like most people living in that region they rely almost completely on their land to produce their food.

But Tigray is not the easiest place to be a farmer – due to its rocky landscape, but also because the region is prone to droughts. In the past few years, the rainy seasons have been very poor. The global food crisis has also meant that food prices have gone up. Families like Abeba’s struggle to have a sustainable source of both food and income and many are used to eating only once a day.

How SCIAF has helped

SCIAF’s partner, ADCS, together with the community, have constructed rain water reservoirs, so that when the rains do come, the water is stored, and isn’t simply lost. Abeba’s father, Gebrenugusso, helped to build the rainwater storage tank and the concrete irrigation canals in the village. The concrete canals take the water from the tank to the fields, so that it is directed to exactly where it is needed. Previous traditional ditches lost a lot of the precious water before it reached the crops.

Agricultural skills have taught Abeba's family and their neighbours better farming techniques. They now know what to plant and when, and they grow a wider variety of crops, including fruit and vegetables, which they both eat and sell at market. This provides much-needed income. They have also learnt business skills, so that they can negotiate to get a better price for their fruit and vegetables.

Quote

"Before the reservoir there was no water around this place. But since our involvement with the project, we have enough water, and all the people around here can water their gardens and grow different vegetables, which gives us food to eat."

Full transcript of interview with Abeba (also see video interview of Abeba)

What's your name?

My name is Abeba, I'm 14 years old, and the name of this place we live is Biera.

Tell us about your home.

We have gardens, for the garden we use water from the reservoir. We grow different crops, when we harvest them we take them to the market and we get some money. With the money we get we buy different things. We buy food, shoes, exercise books, pens, pencils and other things for school.

Has the reservoir and the water from it made a big difference to life here?

Before the reservoir there was no water around this place. But since our involvement with the project, we have enough water, and all the people around here can water their gardens and grow different vegetables which gives us food to eat.

How did the family manage before?

Before, there was not enough water for all our fields. It was a difficult situation for the people living here. Now the irrigation system we have is good, people can grow crops and life is better.

What is the best thing about living here?

I love planting our crops and taking care of them.

What do you not like?

The worst thing is that most of the time, it doesn't rain which means you can't grow crops.

Tell us about your school.

I'm in grade 7 and my favourite subjects are Amharic and Science. I like learning about my surroundings and how to do good things with the environment. The subjects I dislike are Mathematics and English.

What do you do in your spare time?

I like doing my homework and looking after and watering the plants. I like looking after the animals. I also really like gymnastics, and I can do a front flip.

Do you do anything to help around the house?

Yes, I sweep the house, I fetch water, I wash clothes and help my mum make food.

Is there anything you would change about your country, Ethiopia?

If I had power, I would love to see my place turned into a town, having electricity would be really good.