

Story of Change – Gebrekiros and family, Ethiopia



Photo: Thomas Omondi

At a glance

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

SCIAF partner in Tigray

REST (Relief Society of Tigray)

Solution

- Providing families with cows
- Setting up a dairy co-operative
- Providing seedlings

Outcome

Many families that used to eat only one meal a day, are now able to eat 2-3 times a day and have a more varied diet. The income obtained from selling cow's milk is used to buy household essentials and helps families have a more secure existence.

Introduction

Gebrekiros and his family live in Tigray, in the north of Ethiopia, not far from the region's capital Mekele. Levels of hunger in Ethiopia are amongst the worst in the world, especially for those living in rural areas.

In the past few years, the rainy seasons have not brought enough rain and Tigray has suffered many droughts. The global food crisis has also meant that food prices have gone up. This means families struggle to have a sustainable source of food and many are used to eating only once a day.

How SCIAF has helped

SCIAF's partner, REST, have provided dairy cows and animal husbandry training to families. They have also set up a dairy co-operative, where families can take the milk that their cows produce. The dairy has a shop attached to it, which sells the milk and also turns it into butter to sell. The dairy also has a small café, where people can go to have yogurt and milk drinks.

The money that the dairy makes from selling the milk and dairy goods is then repaid to the families that supplied the milk. This means that families have a secure income that they can rely on. They can plan better, and aren't simply surviving from one day to the next.

Quote

“From the dairy programme I earn money and we eat 2-3 times a day.”

Full transcript of interview with Gebrekiros

What is it like to live in this community?

Most of the people are agriculture based, and there are some small traders. Some of them are trading grain or wool, taking them from one market to the other.

How have you benefitted from the REST project?

I got one dairy cow and 2 types of seeds, fruit and vegetables. I got alfalfa feed for the animals.

What is the routine with the dairy cow?

First, after we got the cow, we began to feed the cow, after she gave birth, I milked the cow. I took her to the co-operative and they register the milk that you take. After a month they calculate how much milk they have sold and you get the money. I look after the cows like they are my children. When I go outside in the morning I check them first to see if they are okay.

How long does it take you to milk the cow every day?

It takes 10 minutes to milk the cow. I get minimum 14 litres and maximum 18 litres a day of milk from the cow.

What is the difference?

When I compare before now, our income used to be on a daily basis, we now have many things we can do for the house. From the dairy programme I earn money and we eat 2-3 times a day and we rent oxen to plough. I have also rented land. I have improved my income. I can send my children to school. Three of my children have graduated, one is a nurse, one is a lawyer and one is a secretary.

We are 100% healthier than before. We now have fruit and vegetables and milk. Before, we had diseases; we couldn't sleep because of the lack of food. We worried about what we would eat the next day. My children have now bought me a television to say thanks for all that I have given them. I watch the world news.

What is your hope for the future?

I want to live peacefully. I want to always have a full stomach.