

“I’ve been saved from adversities of life and my family from dismantling”

“For us, day and night were dark. We were in an empty home and awaited my husband’s daily hand-to-mouth income from his daily labor work.”

- Workinesh Teka – mother of six from the Belbella Bulbulo Kebele



Workinesh and her children show their sheep



Workinesh , ECC graduate. in her home

Mrs. Workinesh Teka is thirty-five years old and lives in the Belbella Bulbulo kebele of Wenchi Woreda. She has six children, five of which are girls, with her husband Fekadu Demena. She and her family were identified as one of the most vulnerable households (MVHH) based on set criteria and selected by the kebele to become eligible for Livelihood support provided from the Growth through Nutrition project.

Before the arrival of the project, Workinesh and her family had few income generating assets and were dependent on incomes as daily laborers. She says of the ordeal, “For us - day and night were dark. We were in an empty home and awaited my husband’s daily hand-to-mouth income from his daily labor work and we served as cow herds for our neighbors in exchange for their oxen. My husband was addicted to alcohol and this doubled my burden. We didn’t have a stable life and he and I didn’t agree on anything.”

She adds “I gave a birth to five girls consecutively, Fekadu wanted to have a son.” At the time, Workinesh tells us, Fekadu was considering ending the marriage and remarrying, and she considered sharing her children amongst relatives.

As a beneficiary of the Livelihood support provided from Growth through Nutrition, she was given two sheep, six hens, vegetables, fruits and farming tools. She attended trainings on nutrition sensitive agriculture, animal husbandry (chicken, sheep, goats), and savings.

Workinesh recounts, “This helped me to grow vegetables and raise livestock on our available land plot. From the sheep I received, I now have 10 and sold six of them for 7,400 birr. We were able to buy one of the cows I used to keep for my neighbor.”

She says, “in addition to growing vegetables during the rainy season, now we planted local “inset”¹ for feeding in our garden”. She says her livelihood status has improved over time: “My children consume diversified food from the vegetables and animal products.”

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Workinesh, Fekadu and three of their six children

“We came out from the dark days”

- Workinesh Teka

As an active member of her savings group (which has accumulated 4,900 birr so far), Workinesh has taken full advantage of the group’s benefits, she’s able to support her children, five of whom are attending school.

She also learned about the first 1,000 days using the “sunflower stages” poster and feeding of diversified or “star” foods using the menu planning poster during ECC sessions. She knows about exclusive breast feeding and when to start complementary feeding for children. Workinesh also received SBCC materials like posters to take home and post on her wall. She uses the traditional coffee ceremony as an opportunity to teach her neighbors about nutrition.

The enhanced community conversation and savings group even helped Workinesh learn how to negotiate with her husband. The sessions taught her how to build a good relationship with him so they could eventually discuss and make decisions together. Through this, her husband agreed to stop drinking, stay with her, and improve their lives and that of their children, even strengthening his religious beliefs. This is why Workinesh concludes that her participation saved her family from dismantling and strengthened her bond with her husband.

She explains, “We continued to live together, and I became pregnant and gave birth to our son, the sixth of our children. The need of my husband now fulfilled, the new-born was nicknamed Ararsa means mediator because we agreed and resumed our life due to his birth.” They often call him “Desta” (happiness) to reflect the change in their life. All the Saving Group Enhanced Community Conversation participants were witness to their moving story.

“My husband supports me by collecting firewood, cleaning clothes, fetching water from the source,” reports a contented Workinesh. “He started to buy food that’s not available at home like bananas for the children and took responsibility in constructing the latrine we are using.” She understands the critical times for hand washing and use of soap - before and after food preparation, after latrine use and cleaning of child feces.

During the graduation ceremony, most of the SG ECC participants reflected on the knowledge they acquired, the attitudes towards pregnant, lactating and child feeding, and changes observed in their real lives before and after the GtN intervention.

Workinesh is a source of pride and inspiration to those that know her, as she puts it, “We came out from the dark days, saved from hardship and my family saved from dismantling.”