

Story of Hamdia Muktar

The conflict between the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups caused serious humanitarian crisis and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Based on their ethnicity, people were displaced to and across the two regions in search of safety. Biko and Edishala IDP camps are found in Dendema district of Fafan zone, Somali Regional State and host for more than 33,000 people who were displaced from the kebeles and districts of Oromia Regional State.

Hamdia Muktar is one of the IDPs relocated in Biko camp. The 41 years and mother to 4 children (3 female and 1 male) lived in Erer Ibada kebele, Babile district of East Hararghe zone before the start of the conflict. Hamdia and her husband along with their children fled to Biko following the conflict between the two-ethnic groups in August 2018. "Our kebele was attacked late in the afternoon and my house and that of many others were burned to ashes" said Hamdia. She said that there was no any other option than saving our lives and had to flee empty handed. Hamdia along with her children and husband walked for 42 km during the night time to Biko kebele and remembered the difficult times she has endured. When she and her family were relocated from Erer Ibada kebele to Biko IDP camp, she was happy for being in safety, but subjected to the harsh conditions of the area, with limited access to basic services. As the majority of the IDPs in Biko camp were women and children, the daily tasks of collecting water and maintaining hygiene were a great burden on the most vulnerable people

She and her old daughter had to walk 12 km, about one and half hours one-way to Kora kebele to collect water from small ponds. She heard and was very worried of the violence women encountered while fetching water, but she and no one in the camp had never faced.

For Hamdia and her daughter the biggest burden of collecting water on a daily basis was alleviated when the LWF project started water trucking and supply to the IDPs. She said "not only that we were relieved from walking long hours every day to carry water, but most importantly we had access to clean potable water and feel safe to drink". Hamdia acknowledged to receiving jerry-can, laundry and bathing soaps from LWF and expressed her gratitude. "I was able to use the jerry can for storing water at home and the soap for maintaining the family's personal hygiene. I have seen a lot of improvement on my children's health who previously suffered from diarrhoea and I have spent money for medication". LWF project staff helped us to get knowledge on hygiene and sanitation through disseminating hygiene messages.



“I used to wash my hands only with water after critical times, but after the awareness on hygiene, I also use soap and maintain my personal hygiene. Thanks to LWF, I have also learned on the importance of treating water collected from ponds either by using water treatment chemicals or boiling when there is shortage of chemicals”. Hamdia also mentioned that the project in addition to jerry cans should have distributed plastic buckets to enable us stir water with chemicals easily.

Hamdia is very grateful for the services that LWF provided to the IDPs using the funding from OFDA via IRC and now that the project has come to an end, she said will move and resettle elsewhere.

Story Written by Mohamed Mahdi
Project Team Leader.

