



Finding the Children of the Famine

Ethiopia Twenty Years Later

It was the children who broke our hearts. Their pain reached through TV screens and photographs and compelled us to care. What happened to these small victims of the Ethiopia famine? World Vision tried to find out. We searched for specific children who had received care at World Vision feeding centers, their plight captured by visiting journalists. As a general rule, tracing people in relief situations is difficult because families congregate at aid centers far from their homes, and after they receive help, they disperse.

Finding the children of the Ethiopia famine was even more complicated. The Marxist government's resettlement policy—designed to quell rebellion—uprooted many families. Fighting in the north displaced others. Twenty years later, locating such transient targets seemed nearly impossible, especially in communities without official citizen records.

Miraculously, our local staff found one. In Antsokia Valley we met Yohannes Taye, 22, a young man with a winning smile. Though short and slight, he's strong enough to support eight members of his family by farming sorghum in a hillside community. He has his eye on a girl he'd like to marry.

When Yohannes was 18 months old, his father brought him to World Vision's feeding center. The frail, sick child seemed likely to follow his mother to the grave. "Even those who were treating him thought he wouldn't recover," recalls his father, Taye Shawl. Thanks to intravenous feeding and the close attention of a British doctor, the boy survived. After such a dramatic beginning, he has settled into an ordinary life—but one he knows is blessed.

"I praise God in the highest," says Yohannes, a Christian. "It is through God that people stretched out their hands to save my life."

Finding the children of the famine proved largely fruitless. But Yohannes' story—just one of thousands—confirms that the act of helping a suffering child never is.



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