

Journey to Self-Reliance

Serkut Ayitenfisu, 38 years old, is a woman who lives in Goro Butiji, where JeCCDO is operational in Dire Dawa town. She is a widow heading a family with four children. The whole burden of winning the daily bread of the family falls on the shoulder of Serkut since her husband died in the year 2007. Serkut used to work as a maid in the neighboring kebele (neighbourhood) for a very low wage. It was very difficult to cover daily needs of the family and expenses needed to buy school material for the kids. She tried to supplement her income by selling firewood and charcoal. Her two elderly children usually helped out with this activity.

In the year 2007, Serkut was selected by the village community committees as one of the priority households needing direct Orphan and Vulnerable Children care and support from JeCCDO. Serkut states:

“This support helped me to cover some of the basic needs that I could not before. Among other things it helped two of my kids to regularly attend school.”

In the same year, Serkut became a member of a Self Help Group (SHG) called ‘Yesetoch Tamsalet’ (literally meaning “model of women”). Through the SHG she, along with others members of her group, attended training conducted by JeCCDO.

After the training the group started saving money and five months later, the SHG started providing loans for the members. Serkut is one of the first members who took the loan amounting 200 birr (£13). Serkut adding 100 birr from her own, and started producing and selling hollow blocks made of mud. With the cost of living going up, people with low income are no longer able to afford the escalation of price particularly for construction materials. In Dire Dawa city, hollow blocks made of cement of cost 4 birr per block while the cost of blocks made of mud is 1.25 birr per block. As a result, the demand for mud blocks is increasing.

Serkut now is producing around 30 hollow blocks per day and continued retailing firewood and charcoal. She earns about 20 (£1.25) birr a day.

“I have a plan to expand this activity and start producing hollow blocks made of cement once I can get the necessary working materials. The most challenging thing in doing blocks is shortage of working materials like water tanker, mesh and storing place for blocks. Thanks to God and JeCCDO, things are getting reversed from worse to fair after JeCCDO trained me how to save and invest, I developed self confidence and learnt that the poor can prosper if empowered with the appropriate skills and means.”



Serkut unloading soil for hollow brick production



Serkut producing blocks with her eldest child

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