My name is Maryam Ali.

Age: 12

Lives in: Namma Gubi, Afar region, Ethiopia

I live with my mother and father, an older brother who is 16 and a younger sister who is 5.

Our family raises cattle and goats. We used to have five cattle and 20 goats, but they all died in the drought in the last few years.

Now we have 10 new goats (through an MCC project), and we hope to have milk and meat again soon.

I help my family every day. I help my mother take care of the goats. I walk an hour from my house and then back to bring water we use for drinking and washing ourselves, dishes and clothes. I also work on making mats from palm leaves. My mother walks four days to market to sell our mats.

I like to play with my family and friends, especially my two best friends Hana and Maryam (same name as me) who are the same age.

If you lived in an Afar family, you would:

• Help raise goats and cattle (no need to weed the garden; plants don’t grow well in a land of sand and volcanic rock)
• Live in a house of palm leaves and tree branches
• Move if your animals needed to find better land to graze
• Probably not go to school (The first school in the area opened 12 years ago, and many children, including Maryam, are not in school.)

What part of living in an Afar family would you like best?

What would be the hardest for you?