

Learning by Ear
People Who Make a Difference
Long Run For Life (Ethiopia)

EPISODE 02

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CHARACTERS:

Announcer: Male/Female

Sound clips: Toshome Shumi (male, 16)

Merert (female, 16)

INTRO (Announcer):

Hello and welcome to Learning by Ear. In this series called „People Who Make a Difference“, you meet some of the ordinary heroes of day-to-day life in Africa. They are courageous, authentic and committed. They have a vision for the future and they believe in their dreams. Today you are going to meet Toshome, a young Ethiopian struggling to become a great runner.

1. *SFX: Village, Horse*

6am in the morning. It's a very quiet and foggy crack of dawn. Only a few farmers are out on the muddy road, going to work on their fields with their small and malnourished horses and carriages.

2. *SFX: Running*

And there's one small and lanky boy wearing nothing but rags and worn-out shoes, competing with the horses on the double, easily overtaking one carriage after the other, waving at the farmers, smiling. He's shy as he's never talked to strangers before – but when it comes to his favourite sport, he's willing to open up:

3. *Sound Bite Toshome:*

My name is Toshome Shumi. I'm sixteen and I want to become a runner. My parents are gone, that's a very sad story. But when I'm running I can forget all my troubles. I'm very passionate about running, you know.

We are in Saguree, a small village in the Ethiopian Highlands, somewhere between Asela and Bokoji. Not only does it take more than a day to get to Addis, the country's capital. For the people in the Arsi mountains the big city and its promises for a better future seem to be absolutely out of reach.

4. *SFX: Running (use where find appropriate)*

The highlands are famous for breeding great runners – also for biological reasons. The high altitude of over 2500 meters average spurs the formation of erythrocytes (red blood cells) – the more you have in your body, the more oxygen your body can work with - like natural blood doping. Medical experts agree that the human body – if not exaggerated – benefits from running in many ways. These include the loss of too much weight, reduced risk of heart diseases, more muscle mass, increased bone density, and also an improved emotional state.

Yet for someone pursuing a runner's career conditions couldn't be worse than in Saguree. The village is one of the poorest in the region, it's cut off electricity and running water, not to mention roads. Even four wheel drives get stuck every other day. Saguree doesn't have a sports club, there's no decent equipment, and there are no coaches. And yet Toshome doesn't give up. The young man is used to fighting for what he believes in – against all odds.

5. *Sound Bite Toshome:*

Sometimes there are a couple of friends that come with me. But mostly I do the training all by myself. I don't mind, you know, and actually I prefer to be alone. Believe me: I'll make it, there's a regional competition in summer.

Today his friend Merert is working with him – she’s sixteen years old and shares Toshome’s passion about running.

6. *Sound Bite Merert*

When I run I always think of my great idols, all the mega stars from the Highlands. Then, I forget everything around me, all the hardships and I feel light. It just makes me happy. Even on an empty stomach.

In a few weeks the talent scouts from Addis are due in the highlands again, and Toshome is hoping to be discovered as a promising runner for the 5000 and the 10.000 meters. He’s one of thousands of young Ethiopians who are seeking for club endorsement, longing for a small pay, and hoping for a better life. Toshome is sharing their dream. But he is different. He’s one in a million. Because he’s on his own. Because there’s no way out of his misery except for running.

7. *Sound Bite Toshome:*

I get up at 5:30 am, and then I wash myself and start the training. Until 8am, then I have to go to school.

School, however, is 10km away – and of course Toshome needs to run there, too. Even though he’s sixteen, he still is in fifth grade. His parents died when he was little – they were poisoned, he says. Toshome seems reluctant to talk about it and lowers his head. Tears are running from his face. But he’s quick at wiping them off.

8. *Sound Bite Toshome*

Sometimes I'm thinking about my parents...they would be very proud of me, I guess. Sure my siblings are alive and they do the best they can to help me out. But with the support of my parents my way to success would be so much easier.

9. *Music Interlude (1:00 min - 1:30 min); suggestion: Astatke, Mulatu*

Toshome has moved in with his older brother on a farm in the west of Saguree. He's sharing one of the tiny mud huts with his brothers family, three kids and his sister-in-law. It's not a place where the aspiring runner wants to stay forever.

10. *Sound Bite Toshome*

If I can make some money I'll save it to finally buy some decent running shoes.

The shoes Toshome is wearing right now do not really deserve the name. They have holes in both soles and fall apart at the heels, and Toshome has taped them many times. He had bought them used and they cost him around 8 Euros. That's a lot of money for which he had to work hard for two months. As construction worker, cattle drover, shoe shiner, or waiter in the village's only tea house. Yet he prefers to be the town mayor's delivery boy, he's reliable, honest and does everything on the double. Every job is a welcome extra training unit of many kilometres. And he doesn't mind the bad roads around

Saguree.

11. Sound Bite Toshome

Yeah, these shoes will hold for another two or three months, they have to, as I only have this one pair. And these red trunks – that's all I have.

Toshome is training for the 10.000 metres and the half marathon (21 kilometres), but his favourite distance is the 5000m, which he finishes in less than 15 minutes – on the muddy roads around the village. The world record on tartan track is just less than 13 minutes – and it was set by Toshomes great Ethiopian idol Kenenisa Bekele, the heir apparent of the great world record runner Haile Gebreselassie. He, too, comes from the Arsi region.

12. Sound Bite Toshome

Trust me - one day I will be like Kenenisa. I will wear our National jersey and join the National team. And I'll make it.

13. SFX: Stadium, Cheering Crowds, Running

And he did. A couple of weeks ago we've received a letter from Toshome. The young man states that he did win a regional competition only a month after we visited him in the highlands. The shy boy has left the village of Saguree to become a man and a great runner. He moved in with a legal guardian, his father's friend, in Addis and joined a renowned athletic club. He also sent a picture where he's

proudly wearing an Ethiopian National Team jersey. Toshomes dream has begun to come true. We will see him on the Olympic tracks very soon, we're pretty sure. And of course, he is, too.

14. Sound Bite Toshome

I only feel happy when I run. It's like flying. A day without running is a bad day, you know?

14. SFX: Crowds cheering, Ethiopian National Anthem

OUTRO (Announcer):

That was the story of Toshome, a 16 year old athlete who – despite his difficult situation – knows exactly what he wants to achieve in life and fights hard for it. He has the ambition to follow his big role models: Ethiopian National Heroes like Haile Gebreselassie, Kenenisa Bekele or Tirunesh Dibaba.

What do you think about him?

If you would like to give us your comments, read more about the topic or just listen to his story again, why not visit our website at:

d w world dot de slash l b e (www.dw-world.de/lbe.)

Thanks for listening and we hope you'll join us next time for a new story in this Learning by Ear series called People Who Make a Difference.