

Engineer Abdi Hassen

Personal Profile



My name is Abdi Hassen. I was born in a small town called Babile, located in eastern Ethiopia. At that time, the population was around 5,000. Today, it has grown to at least 50,000. When I was growing up, there was only one elementary school, and most people knew each other. If someone saw me outside during a school day, they would take me to my father and ask, "Why is he here today?"

Early Life

Although my family did not have formal education, they deeply valued learning, tradition, and community. My father could not read, but he often bought newspapers and asked me to read and interpret them into Oromo. My grandparents were farmers who lived about 15 minutes away in a rural area. I visited them nearly every week, which helped me stay connected to both rural and town life.

Finding My Passion

My oldest brother often helped me with my schoolwork. In sixth grade, I scored perfectly on a math exam, and my teacher, Gash Kiflu, made me the class monitor—even though I was the youngest. From that moment on, I developed a deep love for mathematics and began studying it more seriously than any other subject.

Challenges

Since my hometown only had an elementary school, I had to move to another town—Harar, about 35 kilometers away—to continue my education in middle and high school. I lived with one of my brothers during my first year and with friends afterward.

College and Career

I later enrolled at Alemaya College, where one of my brothers had studied, and graduated with a degree in agricultural engineering. After completing my studies, I was hired by the Ministry of Agriculture as a junior irrigation expert. I worked as an assistant to Italian irrigation engineers, helping construct earthen dams and irrigation canals for local farmers.

When we finished the dam, we installed the siphon and opened the water for farmers; that was one of the happiest moments for farmers and for me.

In 2001, I moved to the United States, where I worked various jobs while continuing my education until I earned my teaching certificate. For the past 18 years, I have been teaching high school mathematics, primarily Algebra and Geometry.

And, for the last four years, my friends and I have been buying basic stationery for 100-200 students at Babile Elementary School at the beginning of the school year.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my late brother Muktar Hassen, who helped me every step of the way to be the person I am today.