

**"When they do come [for glasses], we can do more health promotion and screen for other diseases as well": Nebat Abdi, Health Extension Worker, describes integrating near-vision glasses into a broader bundle of healthcare services.**

Rollo Romig  
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**Rollo Romig: Please introduce yourself and tell me about your work.**

**Nebat Abdi:** My name is Nebat Abdi, and I work as a health extension worker.

**Rollo Romig: Is the eyeglasses distribution different from the other work that you do?**



**Nebat Abdi:** It's not much different from the other work that I do, but I'm very happy to have the opportunity to serve for the community by giving them the eyeglasses with the training that we have been given.

**Rollo Romig: What has the response been from the people who have received glasses?**



**Nebat Abdi:** We told the community members that there is an organization that has brought eyeglasses to correct any near vision problem, and they were very happy and excited to receive the eyeglasses. Some of them, when they come to the health post, they're asking us, are we not paying for this? Is this for free? When they heard that it was free they were very happy that they're receiving this for their eyes.

**Rollo Romig: Do you think that giving out the eyeglasses helps get more people to come for other health interventions?**



**Nebat Abdi:** Most of the community members already know us and the work that we do. But for example, there was one man who had no idea about us or the health posts, and he came because of the eyeglass screening, and he was surprised to see us and see what we were doing. And we explained all the other services we give at the health posts, and he didn't know about it and had never seen the health post before that.

They were saying, so now you're working as a doctor. They started seeing us as that when we were giving the eyeglass service. They know us when we go house to house and do outreach work. And they asked us, are you working as a doctor now? And we said that this is additional work that we have started doing, but all the other services are also available.

**Rollo Romig: What sort of things have the people who have received glasses said to you? What kind of impact has it had on them?**

**Nebat Abdi:** Most of the older women were saying that they were worried that they weren't able to read the Quran. But after receiving the eyeglasses, they were able to read their Quran and also use their phone and take down numbers on their phone, because they weren't able to see the numbers on their phone clearly before that.

**Rollo Romig: Have people told you that the glasses have helped them do their work?**

**Nebat Abdi:** One man, his main work is teaching his children the Quran at home, and he wasn't able to do that for his children. After he received the glasses, he was able to teach them the Quran, and that's very important for him. And there was a teacher who wasn't able to prepare what he was going to teach for the next day of school. But after receiving the glasses, he was able to do that.

**Rollo Romig: Can you describe the training that you got to screen for presbyopia and distribute glasses?**



**Nebat Abdi:** The initial training was the blended training. It was uploaded on our phones, so we were able to see the videos and learn from the application on our phones. After that we also received a one day orientation where we practiced.

**Rollo Romig: What was the most useful part of the training or orientation?**



**Nebat Abdi:** The training was really useful, but the orientation was most useful, because we got to practice with the eyeglasses and charts in our hands. Everything was available. And the fact that we practiced right away was very helpful. The training has NCD and MCD parts, so it had large content. It wasn't only specific to presbyopia. So when the orientation was added, that was very helpful for us.

**Rollo Romig: How do you spread the word about the glasses screening?**



**Nebat Abdi:** Before the screening and distribution starts, we inform the community that we will be screening for anyone who has near vision problems, and after that they'll receive glasses. And those who have hypertension or who are diabetic will be referred to be seen by another professional. And after that, if they don't have anything else they will receive the glasses.

**Rollo Romig: Have you found it helpful to include glasses in all the things that you do? Do you think that it's improved your work?**

**Nebat Abdi:** I think it's helpful. At the health post we have more patients coming in because glasses are given for free. Most people like receiving things for free, and just for that purpose, they might come, and when they do come [for glasses], we can do more health promotion and screen for other diseases as well.

**Rollo Romig: Is there anything else you'd like to say that I haven't asked?**

**Nebat Abdi:** If we have the eyeglasses, we can do this as routine work. When we work, we go for outreach and we also work at the health posts. The health post might be closed when everyone is out for outreach. But now that people will be coming more for eyeglasses, one or two people can stay at the health post and work on eyeglasses as routine work, and the others can go for outreach work. Since the campaign was short, just two weeks, we did that very aggressively. But when it's routine, someone can always be at the health posts to give that service.

**Rollo Romig: Thank you so much.**

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*Rollo Romig is the manager of Solutions Insights Lab. He is the author of I Am on the Hit List: A Journalist's Murder and the Rise of Autocracy in India, which was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction.*

*\* This interview has been edited and condensed.*