

"Now I can do my work without mistakes": Eyeglasses Recipients in Dire Dawa, describe the impact of near-vision glasses.

Rollo Romig

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Rollo Romig: What is your name, and what do you do for work?

Tahir Ali: My name is Tahir Ali. I work in a restaurant, cooking.

Rollo Romig: When did you notice that you were having trouble with near vision?

Tahir Ali: For the past five years I've had trouble with my eyes.

Rollo Romig: Did that make it difficult for you to cook?

Tahir Ali: It didn't affect it.

Rollo Romig: What was difficult? How did you know you had a vision problem?

Tahir Ali: I was having trouble seeing my mobile phone and using the Ebirr [electronic payment] app. I would struggle with it, but I would try my best to see it and pay.

Rollo Romig: How did you hear about the screening here today?

 **Tahir Ali:** We got a phone call from the kebele [neighborhood association], and they informed us that we could get screened here.

Rollo Romig: Will you tell other people about the screening?

Tahir Ali: Definitely I will tell people.

Rollo Romig: How did it feel when you put the glasses on for the first time and you could see clearly again?

Tahir Ali: After putting on the eyeglasses, I could very easily identify each small letter, and I was happy. There was a big difference.

Rollo Romig: Thank you.

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Rollo Romig: What is your name, and what do you do for work?

Safiya Aswe: My name is Safiya Aswe. I am a domestic worker. I'll use these eyeglasses for sewing.

Rollo Romig: What kind of sewing do you do?

Safiya Aswe: I make clothes for myself. I also make and repair the cloth that is put on donkeys.

Rollo Romig: How did you feel when you put your new glasses on?

Safiya Aswe: After putting on my glasses, I was able to identify small letters. I saw very clearly, and I was very happy.

Rollo Romig: Thank you.

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Rollo Romig: Tell me your name and what you do for work.

Aster Zirihun: My name is Aster Zirihun, and I support farmers in this community.

Rollo Romig: What do you mean by support?

Aster Zirihun: I go to the farms and train them in modern farming techniques. I teach them how to plant and irrigate.

Rollo Romig: When did you notice that you were having trouble with your near vision?

Aster Zirihun: It's been two or three years since I noticed I had a problem. I couldn't read small letters. I bought glasses, but while I was working on a farm, a stick hit me, and the glasses fell down, and then I stepped on the glasses and they were broken, and I didn't buy any after that. It was very difficult for me. But now I found this opportunity, and I was given new glasses, and I'm very happy about it.

Rollo Romig: When you didn't have glasses, how did that affect your work?

Aster Zirihun: When I try to read, my eyes water and I strain to look at the small letters. When I go out to the farm, there are things I have to write down. I can't write it down in the sun. I have to find a place and slow down and write it so that I can see the letters.

Rollo Romig: Where did you get the other pair of glasses, the ones that broke?



Aster Zirihun: I bought them three years ago at the hospital. It was 3000 birr [\$20 USD] or something. But after they broke, I didn't have enough money to buy the glasses again. Now the price is around 5000 or 6000 birr [\$32 to \$39 USD). It was useful, but I just couldn't afford it, so I didn't buy it.

Rollo Romig: How did you hear about the screening today?



Aster Zirihun: My office is here, and we have an annual campaign that we do, but today I didn't go because I had pain in my leg. Then I saw the health extension workers coming here, and I saw the elders coming in, and I came in to find out what was going on. I thought it was for malaria. I found out it was eyeglasses. I asked to be screened, and then I received the glasses. I'm going to use them during work, because I'm going to be writing. I had stopped writing and reading at night because it wasn't possible, but now I can do my work without mistakes.

Rollo Romig: Will you tell other people?

Aster Zirihun: I'm definitely going to tell others so that they can get glasses, and I'm also going to tell them not to wear them while they're walking and to only use them when they're seeing near things like their phones, but not for any long distance problems. I'm going to make sure I tell other people. It's also my job to make sure the farmers are informed about this.

Rollo Romig: That's great. Thank you very much.

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Rollo Romig: What is your name, and what kind of work do you do?

Adem Aswe: My name is Adem Aswe. I am a security officer at the local administration office.

Rollo Romig: When did you notice that you had trouble seeing up close?

Adem Aswe: It has been seven years now.

Rollo Romig: What did you notice? What have you been having difficulty doing?

Adem Aswe: When I wrote letters, I realized there was a problem. I could not see unless I held it like this.

Rollo Romig: How did you hear about the screening here today?

 **Adem Aswe:** I was told by my colleagues. Previously, I went for a checkup and bought eyeglasses, but they broke, and I could not even use my phone. I had to ask people to check my phone for me. A colleague who was aware of my situation informed me about the screening and told me to come and get eyeglasses.

Rollo Romig: What happened when you got screened?

Adem Aswe: When they checked me, they showed me five letters. Before putting on the glasses, I could only see one; the rest were invisible. With the glasses, I could finally see the other four letters too. I was very happy.

Rollo Romig: How did it feel when you put the glasses on for the first time and could see correctly again?

Adem Aswe: I was excited, knowing that I could now see all the letters and words.

Rollo Romig: How do you think the glasses will help you in your life and in your work?

Adem Aswe: They have a very big advantage. They will really help me with writing letters and using my phone. Previously, when I wrote an 8, it looked like a 9. I could barely tell the difference, but with the glasses, everything is visible.

Rollo Romig: Will you tell other people about the screening here?

Adem Aswe: Of course. I will tell everyone I know and even bring them here. There are some people I have already brought.

Rollo Romig: Do you write as part of your work?

Adem Aswe: Yes. I write people's names, a list of people who do patrolling. We also write during tax collection. There are so many things that we do.

Rollo Romig: What did you do when you had a hard time writing?

Adem Aswe: I asked other people to write for me. It took a lot of time. It was a huge problem.

Rollo Romig: Thanks so much.

Rollo Romig: What is your name, and what work do you do?

Hamdiya Dawi: My name is Hamdiya Dawi. I am a shopkeeper, and I am also a farmer. I do everything.

Rollo Romig: What kind of farming do you do? What do you grow?

Hamdiya Dawi: I grow tomatoes and other vegetables. I also keep livestock.

Rollo Romig: What kind of things do you sell at your shop?

Hamdiya Dawi: Cooking oil, spaghetti, sugar, soap, washing powder, and other foodstuffs.

Rollo Romig: When did you notice that you were having trouble seeing things up close?

Hamdiya Dawi: It has been a while, almost a year. When I work, I struggle with numbers, especially 8 and 9. When I read, I cannot see the words. But when I wear the glasses, I can see clearly.

Rollo Romig: How did that problem affect your work?



Hamdiya Dawi: With technological advancement, people use mobile apps to pay. Unless I hold my phone far away from me, I cannot see the digits when transferring or receiving money.

Rollo Romig: How did you hear about this screening event today?



Hamdiya Dawi: I came after I heard that a US-based organization was distributing eyeglasses to help the community.

Rollo Romig: Who told you?

Hamdiya Dawi: My shop is nearby. I saw it while passing by, and the health extension workers also told me.

Rollo Romig: How did you feel when you put the glasses on and could see clearly again?

Hamdiya Dawi: Alhamdulillah. May God bless you.

Rollo Romig: Before you got the glasses, did you have problems counting money?

Hamdiya Dawi: Yes. Instead of sending 90, I would send 900. When someone sent me money, it was confusing because I could not see the zeros. I had to ask someone else to confirm if the right amount was sent.

Rollo Romig: How do you think your work will change now that you have the glasses?

Hamdiya Dawi: It will significantly change my work. After this, I will never send or receive the wrong amount of money.

Rollo Romig: Thank you so much.

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Rollo Romig: When did you notice that you had trouble seeing things up close?

Recipient: Previously, I had headaches. I did not know it was an eye problem until I went for the screening.

Rollo Romig: How did you hear about the screening today?

Recipient: I brought my mother after I heard about it from people in our area.

Rollo Romig: What do you do for work?

Recipient: I am a housewife. I do house duties like cooking, fetching firewood, and cleaning.

Rollo Romig: How will these eyeglasses be useful for you?

Recipient: I use the glasses for domestic work and sorting.

Rollo Romig: Thank you.

ICON LEGEND

 Advocacy

 Money

 Supply

 Demand generation

 Partnerships

 Technology

 Distribution channel

 Regulation

 Training

 Media campaigns and marketing

 Screening

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.*