

Family Reunion and University - A Double Celebration!

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w/ Edeo

Name - Edeo

Where are you from?

I am from Ethiopia, mainly from Oromia, the biggest region.

How did you arrive into the UK?

I arrived in the UK on the back of a lorry through Calais. Initially I started the journey from Ethiopia to Sudan. I stayed in Sudan for 3 months and 24 days and then I directed to France. In France I moved to Calais, and this whole journey was arranged by the Agent. In Calais I stayed for a week or more in the Jungle. It was not a good situation. I slept in a small tent and I got support from the Salam Project, funded by the Catholic Church. In fact, the people in Calais also support the refugees and the wider community, they would bring food, clothes, and give out their contact details. When someone is sick, they call those contacts. For example, Maam gave her personal number and advised to call her anytime day and night if there is anyone that needs support. She was doing all of this voluntarily, I was so surprised that she was doing this. Many people know Maam's name.

She took me two times in the week to a place kind of like a hotel, with a shower room, and brought her colleagues to allow us to shower, freshen up and provided us with clean clothing. She's an old lady over 60 but she helped a lot of people.

What were your first impressions of the UK? And what did you miss the most about being away from your home country?

Previously my understanding of the UK was that when the police catch you they may handcuff you, but they treated me well and were friendly. They took me to the Centre, and I got one lady she treated me well and told me that I can only stay for a short period of time in that room. She asked me, did the police officer affect you, or hurt you? They took care of me, this was my first

impression. When someone illegally goes to a country why would they treat me like this, but they helped me.

I miss my job - I was in a good position, I was getting a good salary. I had a good situation and I enjoyed my life. I was in a higher academic profile and I miss all those things. I am not happy because I am not in the academic life, and I feel I am forgetting things, and if I was there I would have been in a higher position especially because I was working with the African Agriculture Team and I created journals and books focusing on the seed business in Africa. We worked together, about 20 people, publishing various publications and we all wrote a chapter based on our expertise - sharing my Ethiopian experience with the rest of Africa. We have an African programme on seed harmonisation meaning that the seed system in Africa should be interlinked, and in the future we were going to implement some seed training between Central and East African countries. Ethiopia's the first - we started the integrated Seed Sector programme, that program expanded to the rest of Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Mali, South Sudan and the experts from those countries would come to Ethiopia and take the experience back home. I shared experiences for experts of this type to the rest of Africa. Later on, I was the Private Seed Sector Advisor. The private seed sector was previously scattered and I tried to bring them together to have more power over pricing and other important decisions within agriculture. We established one entity and even worked on the business aspect as well as the maintenance of their website. We hosted different training workshops for the benefit of different countries.

How did you feel, being without your family and loved ones?

It was very hard time for me to be alone here, I tried to socialise with other colleagues, and manage that way. But life was very hard; it was difficult for me to be alone. Especially when I was sleeping, I had very strange dreams about my family and my kids.

Did you think you would ever see your family again?

I knew the process was difficult and the decision of gaining or not gaining their visas was uncertain but I had hope.

What made you want to move to Birmingham?

I moved from Liverpool to Birmingham because of the strong Oromo community here. I wanted to socialise with them. The Oromo Community in the United Kingdom is worried about and opposes the repression, torture, arbitrary arrests, killings and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment perpetrated by the Ethiopian government on the Oromo people. The Oromo

community in the West Midlands is strongly working on the diplomatic activity on behalf of our community against this indiscriminate violent by Ethiopian Government. Therefore, I want to part of this operation opposing this action of repression, torture, arbitrary arrests, killings and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment perpetrated by the Ethiopian government on the Oromo people. I also have family connections in Birmingham, being alone in Liverpool was difficult so being in Birmingham felt a lot better than before.

Tell us about your previous education and employment experience...

I have a BSc and Masters in Agriculture and Economics and studied at a prestigious Haramaya university. I joined this university in 2004, for my BSc, and graduated in 2009. I then went onto MSc in 2011.

Before this, I studied a Diploma in General Agriculture at Ambo University. I joined this university in 2001 and graduated in 2002. I worked in only 2 places, I joined the Catholic Relief Service, a big NGO in our country, and worked as an agribusiness expert i.e. agricultural business promoter especially mainly focusing on small scale irrigation producers. They are a group of farmers that produce fruit, vegetables and pulses. I worked on the market linkage, pricing, and promotion as well as working on some exportable commodities like pulses, such as haricot beans. I organised farmers to produce these beans for exporting and tried to link them with exporters and processors. We linked them and gave them training in producing quality beans ready for export. On the other side, I also worked on the aid in the drought prone area where there is a shortage of rain, we provided food, small ruminants like goat and sheep for asset building.

The other project was at Hawassa University. I worked as an Agriculture Business Innovator. I worked on integrated seed sector development program, we worked with macro issues like seed harmonisation, the establishment of a private seed producer association and linking with the rest of Africa. We worked on the seed harmonisation working internally and externally with others – a much bigger project than before. I worked mainly on macro issues like seed law, regional integration, and harmonisation, building strong relationships with other African countries. In this university I gave teaching assistance to the professors on issues relating to the seeds. If someone graduates they have to work on the project assisting with research and helping them work on their submission papers. 25% I contributed to the teaching and 75% on research at the university.

Future wise, what subject will you be studying?

In the future I want to study econometrics, and mathematics because I want to be a researcher, it is the subject I am most interested in. Even if you work in the digital marketing field, you have to

have this experience. It is an area I can engage in within this country hence my reason for wanting to study this.

How does your previous education link towards your proposed university degree?

I mainly studied economics, it contain courses like mathematics, econometrics, marketing, statistics and operational research.

You've been working hard to reunite with your family, how did you feel when you received the news that your family have been granted their status?

It is difficult to express that, I am more than happy because I did not expect 100% that they would join me - when I heard that news I was so surprised. I was writing an email and I couldn't finish. I was so happy, more than anything.

Now that you've reunited with your family, what does the future look like?

I feel the future is bright, but human beings can think good things and God is the only one that can make it real. I feel it is bright, I will get a good education, a placement, I will get a good job, my kids will also get a good education.

Is there anything you would like to say?

I want to say thanks to everyone who has assisted me in all of my situations, my family reunion, getting accommodation, and those people assisted me in getting an education with college. I want to especially say a thank you to ACH - whenever I get any difficulty, whenever I feel a problem I run to ACH automatically and to you Sam, my support worker. I brought a lot of issues but you didn't make me feel like I was bothering you. I want to say to thanks to all the office staff, they always greet me with a smile. Also to Restore, who have helped me connect with an academic tutor who helped me a lot. Generally I would like to say thank you to the UK government. I was in prison back home in a difficult situation and I did not feel like a human being, but immediately when I first met with the UK police I felt safe. So a big thank you to the government - I got everything, my status early, my accommodation and I did not expect this situation. I am so happy.