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In memory of Tesfu Equbeyonas



At the end of August our dear colleague and friend **Tesfu Equbeyonas** passed away untimely and suddenly, leaving a deep void in the **Bridging the Gap** team and in the disability rights movement in **Ethiopia**. Yet shocked by his loss, we would like to remember him as the kind, cheerful and committed person he was.

Tesfu worked as Training and Capacity Building Coordinator for Bridging the Gap (BtG) in the Ethiopia team at the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) (<https://www.entwicklung.at/en/>) since early 2018. He was a dedicated advocate for the rights of **persons with disabilities** in Ethiopia and will be remembered for his significant contributions in supporting his country on the road towards **inclusion**.

Before joining BtG and ADA he worked for six years with the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development (<https://www.ecdd-ethiopia.org/>) in his last position as a Training and Communications Director and with Cheshire Ethiopia (<https://cheshirethiopia.org/>) for eight years engaged in

the rehabilitation and social integration of children and youth with disabilities in Ethiopia.

Tesfu's contribution to raising awareness on disability and the rights of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia is unquestionable. He was a professional trainer and very skilled facilitator who really brought the audience on his side and made people realise what we need to change the way we work to make our societies inclusive. His humor and collegial approach was a great asset in any of his undertakings. Tesfu had a comprehensive knowledge of many specific such as **Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)**, community saving mechanisms, and of the legal and policy framework pertaining to disability of which he was dedicated in sharing his knowledge for the benefit of a wide range of audience.

Friends and colleagues who wrote BtG on hearing of his sudden passing all remembered him with similar attributes. Tesfu will be remembered for his positive attitude, humor, honesty and commitment to his work.

Some of the words shared by former colleagues in the disability sector:

"He had an amazing sense of humor and was a caring friend."

"Tesfu had been a humble, tolerant genuine and a man of integrity. He had been a practical person in promoting the voices of the voiceless and vulnerable people and empowering the disempowered. He had contributed more in promoting CBR in Ethiopia"

"Tesfu was more than a colleague to me, he was like an older brother, as I always call him my God Father. My brother, my friend, my colleague, gone too soon. May God grant us strength at this difficult time. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

He will be deeply missed by the BtG team and by many other friends and colleagues, in the disability sector and beyond.

Let us honor Tesfu's memory through continuing working for **inclusive societies**, and to be guided by Tesfu's humor and positive attitude in changing people's mindsets and paving the way for change.

Pia Korpinen, Bridging the Gap Country Coordinator in Ethiopia

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