

In memoriam

Today we are gathered here to say farewell to our good friend and colleague Andemariam Teklesenbet. His connection to Iceland goes back about 8 years. In 2006 Andemariam participated in a course in Kenya run by the UNU Geothermal Training Programme. He showed such outstanding performance that he was offered a 6 month fellowship at the UNU Geothermal Programme in Iceland the following year. Upon completing the course with excellence he returned to Eritrea and worked for 2 years on geophysical exploration, after which he was offered a scholarship from the Geothermal Programme to complete a masters degree at the University of Iceland. Although difficult, as you can imagine, to leave his wife and young son in Eritrea, Andemariam did not hesitate to accept the offer. He wanted to further his knowledge and skills to be better equipped to help his own country. His steadfast aim was to return back to Eritrea after completing his studies and to contribute with his knowledge in developing the rich geothermal resources of Eritrea for the benefit of the Eritrean people.

In 2009, shortly after arriving in Iceland to pursue his masters studies, Andemariam was diagnosed with a rare type of cancer in his windpipe. Despite surgery, aggressive chemotherapy and radiotherapy, the cancer grew back, and when modern medical technology did not work, Andemariam was given the option of becoming the first synthetic windpipe transplant recipient in the world. He accepted, knowing that this was his only hope. The operation, which involved growing his own stem cells on a synthetic windpipe, was performed in the summer of 2011 and made news around the world. Andemariam's bravery and strength in the fight for survival was remarkable. He continued his studies with incredible endurance, and in early 2012 he defended his master thesis on the Alid geothermal area in Eritrea. By then his wife, Merhawit, and two young sons had come to Iceland to stay with him.

Due to his continued treatment in Iceland and Sweden, Andemariam could not return to his home country after completing the degree, in spite of this being high in his mind. He used to say, *I WILL go home and help my country to develop geothermal when my health has improved.* He got a temporary job with ISOR, Iceland Geo Survey, where he was involved in exploration projects with his old supervisor and good friend Gylfi Pall Hersir. He also served as supervisor for students at the UNU Geothermal Programme where his knowledge and human skills were of great value.

During the last year or so Andemariam's condition gradually deteriorated, and despite his heroic fight and the best possible efforts of medical doctor Tómas

Guðbjartsson and his colleagues at Landspítalinn in Reykjavík and Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, he was finally defeated at the end of January.

Andemariam showed immense strength and endurance during the 5 years he battled his illness. We admired his calmness and balance through all this, and how positive and strong he managed to be. He was obviously a good husband and father who welcomed his third beautiful son 3 months ago. It is hard to imagine the sorrow of his wife, Merhawit, who now has to continue alone with her three sons.

Andemariam will continue to live in our minds as a brilliant geophysicist and a vibrant personality who always looked at life from the positive side. The UNU geothermal family pays its deepest respect to him and heartfelt condolences to Merhawit and their three young sons.

The Director of the UNU Geothermal Programme, Lúðvík Georgsson, could unfortunately not be here to day. He sends his good wishes.

May God bless you all.