

Oromia Physicians Association

3rd Bulletin

6th Annual Conference

Selfless commitment to give back!

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S.N	Activity	Responsible Person	Time	Moderator
1.	Registration	OPA EC	8:30am-9:00am	"Organizing Committee"
2.	Welcoming Note Address	OPA General Secretariat	9:00am-9:05am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
3.	Blessing and rituals	Abbootii Gadaa	9:05am-9:15am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
4.	OPA Presidential address	Dr Belayneh Leta	9:15am-9:25am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
5.	OPA Board chairman Address	Prof. Senbeta Guteta	9:25am-9:35am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
6.	Official opening speech	"Honorable guest of the day"		
		OHB (Dr Mengistu B.)	9:35am-9:50am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
		FMoH (Dr Dereje D.)	9:50am-10:10am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
7.	Keynote Speakers	IOHPA (Dr. Ibrahim)	10:10am-10:20am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
		WMA (Dr Esaias)	10:20am-10:30am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
8.	OPA Award of the year 2023	"Dr Godana with Honorable guest of the day"	10:30am-10:50am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
9.	OPA Annual activity report 2023.	Dr Gemechu	10:50am-11:10am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
10.	"Navigating Global Health Education For Physicians: Experiences and Insights From His Journey"	"Dr. Hailu Tamiru (Harvard University)"	11:10am-11:20am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
11.	Tea break /Networking		11:20am-11:40am	
12.	"Exploring the Global Landscape of Humanitarian Aid and Charting the Course for Future'"	WHO-Ethiopia	11:40am-11:50am	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
13	"Financial Audit Report, Discussion on the Activities And Audit Report"	Auditor	11:50am-12:00pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
14	Lunch time		12:00pm-1:30 pm	
15	Panel discussion	OPA, OHB	1:30pm-2:00pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
16.	"The Endangered State of Healthcare and the Indispensable Contribution of NGOs in the Modern Era'"	ICRC	2:00pm-2:20pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
17.	Scientific presentation On Esophageal cancer	Dr. Biniyam T.	2:20pm-2:40pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
18.	"Scientific presentation (Malaria Among pregnant mothers in Africa evidences from systematic review and meta-analysis: Umbrella Review of Malaria among pregnant mothers in Africa)"	Getahun Fetensa	2:40pm-3:00pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
19	"Election of OPA Board Members, Executive Committees, Focal Persons"	Election committee	3:00pm-3:30pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
20	Certificate award		3:30pm-4:00pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
21.	Closing remark	"New OPA President/Dr Bokona Guta"	4:00pm-4:10pm	Dr. Sifessa/Dr. Iman
	Selfless commitment to give back!			

Oromia	Physicians Association Mobile	Health Team	
Dr. Belayneh Leta	Dr. Firaol Ketema	Dr. Iman Ibrahim	Dr. Getnet Damena
Dr. Dessalegn Fekadu	Dr. Horal Sediso	Dr. Gemeda Nebi	Dr. Netsanet Ayalew
Dr. Yared Boru	Dr. Sisay Lema	Dr. Abdi Dereje	Dr. Ijo Niguse
Dr. Gemechu Biftu	Dr. Saro Turo	Dr. Gobena Mormata	
Dr. Guta Gurmessa	Dr. Tolera Gizaw	Dr. Asmera Dhaba	
Dr. Muleta Bekfene	Dr. Temesgen Haile	Dr. Etana Kisi	
Dr. Girma Hirphasa	Dr. Jikos Abdi	Dr. Osman Aman	
Dr. Muse Muluneh	Dr. Mihiretu Tesfa	Dr. Belay Demise	
Dr. Jilcha Gugsa	Dr. Dessalegn Tolera	Dr. Fikru Bekele	
Dr. Muhidin Ibrahim	Belay Bekele	Dr. Alemu Gemeda	
Dr. Natnael Tesfaye	Dr. Biftu Anteneh	Dr. Abdi Geleta	
Miessa Nenko	Dr. Gizachew Abebe	Dr. Dessalegn Dejene	
Guto Negasa	Dr. Nagasa Biratu	Gelana Lemi	
Mustefa Shubena	Dr.Gemechis Geremew	Liya Adisu	
Dr. Kiya Wario	Dr. Garoma Kitessa	Melkamu Dekeba	
Dr. Mekonnin Biruk	Gutema Wondemu	Dr. Tariku Gelashe	
Dr. Gemechu Gebisa	Dr. Obsa Getnet	Dr. Bedhasa Regasa	
Firaol Worku	Gena Gobena	Dr. Dessalegn Tadesse	
Dr. Mohammed Fitora	Gemechu Yohannis	Sr. Israel Shiferaw	
Dr. Kebena Teferi	Phawulos Telila	Dr. Malegna Temesgen	
Dr. Galmessa Chimdessa	Imana Raga	Dr. Wegene Asefa	
Dr. Abdi Ketema	Hundie Fayera	Dr. Sena Kebebew	
Dr. Alemayehu Kefeni	Kebena Limu	Dr. Bacha Mirkena	
Dr. Milki Tufa	Dr. Bikila Regasa	Dr. Debela Urgessa	
Dr. Dereje Tolasa	Keneni Taye	Dr. Dessalegn Dejene	
Dr. Abdisa Ushi	Firafis Abuna	Dr. Tekalign Tafesse	
Dr. Hailu Urga	Andula Markos	Dr. Edosa Bulcha	
Dr. Girma Atinku	Danu Shibeshi	Dr. Habtamu Kelile	
Dr. Samuel Gizaw	Melkamu Feyisa	Dr. Tadesse Gemeda	



Message from the Head of Oromia Health Bureau

Dear OPA families,

I am thrilled to send you my warmest wishes and congratulations on your 6th annual conference of 2016 E.C. It's amazing to look back on the journey we have had since the establishment of OPA, overcoming numerous challenges to create an accessible, high-quality, and equitable health system aimed at reducing morbidity, preventing avoidable causes of death, and enhancing overall community satisfaction. Recognizing that delivering health services is a team effort, we must focus on nurturing a motivated, compassionate, and caring (MCC) health workforce.

This year, OPA has made significant progress in providing support to our people in different parts of the region affected by drought, outbreaks, war, malnutrition, and displacements, thanks to your collaboration with other local and international stakeholders. Our health workers in the wider Oromia Region have shown unwavering dedication and sacrifice in serving the community in need, and I am incredibly proud to lead such a dedicated team.

While we have achieved a lot, there is still much more to be done to meet the extensive demand from our community. Together, we must work on strengthening the quality of health service delivery and digitilizing our health service platforms to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through providing comprehensive services, well-regulated health, and health-related services and products, as well as ensuring financial protection to households. Along the long journey to achieve UHC, I also want to urge the active participation of investors, Diaspora Communities, IOHPAs, and local and international NGOs to help us realize the vision of building a smart health system.

As the head of the Oromia Health Bureau, I feel extremely privileged and honored to celebrate this significant occasion and extend my heartfelt congratulations to all OPA families. I look forward to closely working with you.

Best regards,
Dr. Mengistu Bekele,
Head,Oromia Health Bureau (MD, MPhil-HE)



Message from the Board chair of OPA

Dear Esteemed colleagues,

As we gather for the 6th Annual Conference of the Oromia Physician Association (OPA), I am filled with gratitude and pride. Our theme this year, "Connecting for Healing: Empowering Healthcare Heroes through Strategic Partnership," encapsulates our commitment to collaboration, innovation, and excellence in healthcare delivery.

OPA has consistently stood at the forefront of humanitarian efforts, especially in responding to crisis affecting drought-prone, war-torn, and outbreak-ridden areas of the Oromia region. Our Medical Doctors and healthcare workers have selflessly served those in need, often under challenging circumstances. Our Physicians' dedication and resilience exemplify the true spirit of healing, and this is a testimony to the quote "Healthcare is not only a profession; it's a calling to make a positive impact on others' lives".

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Health Bureau of Oromia Region and all stakeholders for their unwavering support. Their trust in our mission, and their willingness to collaborate have been instrumental in facilitating the delivery of our medical care humanitarian efforts to our people. Together we have made a difference in countless lives.

Our stakeholders: World Health Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Oromo Health Professionals Association, Wabii Maccaa Association, Maccaa Tulama Association, Universities in Oromia, UOECs, and the diaspora community have been our pillars of strength. Their expertise, resources, and shared vision have amplified our impact. Let us continue to nurture these partnerships and explore new avenues for collective healing.

As health professionals, we must actively engage in research, collaborate with universities, research institutions, and industries. Let us explore novel solutions, from diagnostics to treatment progress. Research fuels progress.

Moreover, let us stay informed about emerging technologies: artificial intelligence (AI), telemedicine, genomics, and wearable devices that are transforming healthcare. Embrace these tools ethically and integrate them into our practice for better patient outcomes. As we innovate or make use of the emerging technologies, let us uphold ethical standards. Ensuring patient privacy, informed consent, transparency, and ethical decision-making are integral to our profession.

Dear our esteemed Physician members, I urge you to invest in your personal and career growth. Stay updated on medical advancement, research breakthroughs, and best practices through attending webinars, workshops, and conferences. Lifelong learning ensures that we provide the highest quality care. Developing leadership competencies is also essential. Whether you aspire to lead a team, a department, or an entire healthcare organization, leadership skills are essential. Advocate for positive change and be a role model. I would also like to reiterate that connecting with colleagues, mentors, and industry leaders is crucial. Networking opens doors to collaboration, mentorship, and career opportunities.

As we embark on this conference journey, let us celebrate our achievement, learn from each other, and forge stronger bonds. Our strategic partnerships, fueled by innovation, research, and personal development, will shape the future of healthcare in the Oromia region, Ethiopia, and the world. Together, we heal, empower, and transform lives.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment. Let us continue to be healthcare heroes, connected by purpose and compassion.

With warm regards,

Prof. Senbeta Guteta Abdissa (MD, MPH, Consultant Internist and Cardiologist) Board Chair, Oromia Physician Association.



Message from the President of OPA

Dear Guests, members of the executive board, members of the executive committee, respected partners, members of OPA, and our supporters all over the globe, I am humbled and grateful to be able to convey this short message as the president of this hopeful association.

Two years ago, when I became the president of this association, there was a lot of uncertainty due to internal and external factors. The challenges were immense. So were the expectations. Even though I knew the challenges ahead, I fully accepted the responsibility of upholding the honor and integrity of this precious baby association.

The support I received from all corners of the globe has been overwhelming since my first day in this role. Today, I would like to thank and congratulate all parties involved for the amazing progress we have achieved together. I want to express my appreciation to my incredible executive team members who went above and beyond with me. Additionally, I want to express gratitude to the board members, the ever present IOHPA and amazing members, the leadership of the Oromia Regional Health Bureau, the exceptional volunteers, ICRC, and other partners. Together, we were able to relieve pain, avert imminent death, alleviate hunger, wipe the tears of our mothers, and provide a glimpse of hope in desperate situations.

Health facilities were capacitated and revitalized. Our positive advocacy has led to significant results across the region. Our collective voice was heard loud and clear across every corner. In my opinion, we were successful in redefining the role of professional associations in this country. We were also able to demonstrate the power of meaningful connections and partnerships.

Though we have achieved so much together, there is still a long way to go in this never-ending journey. However, I am optimistic about the future prospects because I have seen members moving forward with confidence and purpose, I have seen members speaking with conviction, I have seen members serving with honor, courage, and commitment, I have seen members hold firm to the science and ethics of our profession. Moreover, I have seen senior and junior physicians putting their lives on the line to give back to the community in need.

Dear Members, we have the power and responsibility to establish the course and shape the future of this association. I believe that through unity, hard work, and meaningful connections, we can overcome any hurdle in front of us. We can settle the debates of our time surrounding this profession in so many positive ways.

Let us answer the call to duty. Let us go again. Selfless commitment to give back.

Thank you.

Dr. Belayneh Leta , President- OPA

Message from the World Health Organization-Ethiopia, Health Cluster Coordinator

Crucial role of local NGOs in reaching communities in need.

Ethiopia has been repeatedly affected by conflict, flooding, drought, and disease outbreaks in the past years. As of today, Ethiopia is struggling to control the longest recorded cholera outbreak which started in August 2022, recurrent measles outbreaks which started in August 2021, and the highest number of malaria cases reported since 2017. The El Niño and la Niña weather phenomena are causing further havoc, causing drought in some parts of the country, and flooding in others. Food insecurity due to lost harvest and livestock is negatively impacting already high malnutrition rates, leading to preventable illness and deaths.

When comparing Ethiopia with neighbouring countries, the high maternal and neonatal mortality rates stand out, as well as the low share of births attended by skilled health workers and low coverage of essential health services. According to data from the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), the main causes of death in Ethiopia are neonatal conditions followed by lower respiratory infection and diarrhoeal diseases. The concerning figures are mostly the result of limited access to health care, particularly in regions with over 80% pastoralist population like Afar and Somali. The only access to basic health care in those areas are through mobile health services, but these are expensive and therefore depend on availability of external donor funding.

As a result of conflict, flooding, and drought, 3.5M people are internally displaced in Ethiopia, as per the latest available data from IOM from September 2023. Ongoing conflict in Sudan and Somalia in 2023 increased the refugee population to over 1.1M people across the country.

Conflict and natural disasters are directly resulting in a surge in malaria cases, interrupting effective vector control interventions to minimise the mosquito or sandfly population, distribution of supplies including bed nets, testing kits, and medicines, as well as adequate surveillance and training of health workers in diagnosis and treatment. Lack of availability of safe drinking water and open defecation are root causes of cholera outbreaks, which have been recurring in 118 cholera hotspot woredas since 2017. Over 60% of cholera patients report using untreated water from rivers or ponds. Data indicate a 157% increase in laboratory confirmed measles cases in 2023 when compared to 2022 with 56% of children under 5 never receiving any vaccination against measles.

Damage to health facilities and water supply systems due to flooding and conflict is increasing the risk of spread of disease and limiting access to health care. Drought is negatively impacting malnutrition and forcing people to use untreated water, while ongoing fighting is impeding access to communities and health facilities for vector control interventions, transport of samples for laboratory confirmation, distribution of supplies like diagnostics tests, drugs, vaccines, and bed nets, and training of health workers.

Unfortunately, government funding for preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery of public health emergencies is limited, leaving communities often reliant on NGO support. Particularly in areas with active conflict, access for government staff is often off-limits. UN agencies and large international NGOs have strict security measures, impeding their staff to travel to areas in need. Therefore, local health partners have a unique role to play in health service provision, last-mile delivery of supplies, and disease outbreak response. They are often part of the community they serve and have better understanding of the local context and better connections with local authorities. Thanks to partners like OPA, life-saving malaria supplies were delivered to health facilities in areas with difficult access to the government. OPA's easy access to areas in Western Oromia allowed for the training of health workers in the latest malaria treatment protocols, as the government had not been able to conduct training because of access issues. This type of interventions is crucial and lifesaving: without OPA, the health facilities would not have been able to properly treat malaria patients, causing preventable deaths.







With blue t-shirt: monitoring primary health centre run by IOM in Qoloji IDP site in Somali
With white t-shirt: visiting the EPSS warehouse in Mekelle, Tigray, to discuss partner support in last-mile delivery of government supplies to health facilities



Message from International Oromo Health Professionals Association (IOHPA) President

Dear OPA members, Fellow Physicians, Board of Directors and OPA Executive Committee,

Congratulations to you all for making OPA - A success story! Baga Konfiraansii waggaa 6ffaan isin gahe.

Here is take:

Seeds for organized struggle often times start in a form of one person's protest against a system that he or she perceives as unjust or cruel. Many physicians before me and I went through medical education system in Ethiopia at a time when no one is allowed to question the authority of University officials or instructors; when daring to do so could cost a student losing the opportunity to graduate with a degree. Getting organized was unthinkable and freedom of expression of thoughts was severely suppressed.

Some of us said no to humiliation, unjust treatments, and denial of academic freedoms. We dared to challenge the system, were willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice. We did pay an immense price for that exercise. I want to share with you a story of mine; when I felt standing alone in the ring facing the rath of unforgiving AAU Professor, surrounded by terrified looking fellow students, I did not buckle down, instead I gathered my courage and roared like a lion " I am the unchallenged challenger, the ever courageous to tell the truth...". That roar could have cost me the opportunity to complete medical education. As the saying goes what does not kill you, makes you stronger. I survived. Fast forward, we are at this moment when we are talking about not only speaking up but organizing our fellow professionals to take that struggle to a higher level.

The Establishment of Oromia physicians association (OPA) in the year 2018 was such a thunderous moment when we the Oromo health care professionals in diaspora did not only feel the need to organize but also did whatever we could to help our dispossessed masses back home and empower our fellow disenfranchised physicians. Freedom does not come free. For far too long physicians in Ethiopia have been marginalized, denied the benefits and dignity they deserve for their years of hard work and education. Regaining your status as respected and dignified physicians with all the benefits and privileges bestowed upon you when you graduated with a Doctor of Medicine degree starts with each one of you living up to the expectations of the "Doctor" in your society.

Dear Doctors, Dear colleagues, go to your work places early in the morning, treat all of your patients equally, with respect and empathy, advocate for the rights of your patients to a better healthcare services utilizing all the opportunities you get including having conversations with the management of the hospitals and health facilities where do you work, as many time as you can, and with the policymakers and politicians, within the regional and federal ministry of health. When physicians discharge all their obligations and duties as responsible citizens and professionals, on that moral background you often earn an unconditional respect from the communities they serve. Physicians who are respected and appreciated by the communities they serve will have a strong collective bargaining power for better compensation for their service and improved living conditions, and etcetera.

Doctors who earn respect for their professional services, and who often times go above and beyond the Call of Duty to relieve the immense suffering of their people, will have the moral authority to ask for a more dignified treatment and the better compensation for their service.

I strongly urge you to get better organized at all levels of care, demand, and fight for your rights and that of the rights of all the people whose well-being depends on your ability to provide a fair and quality healthcare for all. The international Oromo health professionals association (IOHPA) and its leadership are immensely proud of the magnificent achievements of Oromia physicians association under the able leadership of its current and past presidents, and board directors.

All praises be to all Oromia physicians and health professionals who risked their precious lives to provide essential medical services to Oromo communities and individuals displaced because of the inter-ethnic conflicts; and services to the students and young people seriously injured during the clashes between peaceful protesters and the armed military personnels following the assassination of our dearest iconic singer Hachalu Hundessa. I strongly believe that the courage you showed during those dark times served as a springboard in your efforts to organize as healthcare professionals and eventually led to the establishment of OPA.

Many oromia physicians before you made tremendous effort over the years to form an association to advocate for their interests and fight for the betterment of healthcare services in oromia. However, their efforts did not bear fruits because of obstacles created by a system that was designed to make sure that such a thing would not happen. Naturally , in all human struggles, when most of the people give up a few persevere against all odds, adapt to changing challenges, work their way through a treacherous journey, organize themselves clandestinely and eventually achieve stellar

result. To many of us the establishment of OPA with the unparalleled commitment of a few courageous selfless Oromia physicians was one of the significant historical milestones that heralded down of a new beginning for healthcare professionals and improved healthcare services delivery in Ethiopia in general and oromia in particular.

Advocating for the rights of physicians and health professionals under the banner of organizations such as OPA does not only promote the interests of physicians, bring dignity to the profession but also plays significant role in promoting an inclusive and improved healthcare services delivery within the public and private healthcare systems in the country.

One of the most impactful strategic decisions made by IOHPA was the decision to support the establishment of OPA and foster our partnership as sister organizations. The founders of IOHPA believed that the best way to have impactful and sustainable interventions in Oromia and beyond for any of our projects back home is by working through trusted partners who have similar mission and vision. OPA is one of such organizations whose birth and successful growth as a vibrant professional organization in Oromia made many of us enormously proud and overjoyed with your hitherto unseen selfless services during the Borana Oromo famine of 2023, emergency medical relief services to the displaced Guji Oromo, and communities affected by perennial conflicts and Malaria outbreaks in Wallaga zones of Oromia.

We were saddened by the images of the severely malnourished elderly people and children and the massive loss of livestock and livelihood of the Borana Oromo. However, we were equally overwhelmed by the massive response to that crisis and overjoyed by images such as the OPA President's, Dr. Belay Leta, carrying a box of medical supply on a rainy day to reach affected communities in hard-to-reach areas. It is historical moments like this that become the defining moment in the history of an organization. Kudos to OPA members and Volunteers who took part in multiple rounds of medical mission trips to various parts of Oromia. Kudos to its leadership for organizing and leading by example.

Long IOHPA and OPA partner! Glory to all Oromia Physicians and Health professionals who paid ultimate sacrifices and never lived to see these days.

Kaayoo Qabna,

Ibrahim Elemo, MD, MPH, FACP
President and Board Director, IOHPA

Message from International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Ethiopia

The ICRC in Ethiopia works closely with partners and stakeholders operating in the country to assist and protect people affected by armed conflict and violence. We partnered with Oromia Physicians Association (OPA) to address health issues in Oromia region, especially in areas most affected by conflict. We also work with the Ministry of Health, Regional health bureaus and other partners to ensure lifesaving health services are available to individuals and communicates affected by conflict in 5 regions in Ethiopia.



Message from Wabii Maccaa Association (WMA) former President

Prioritizing Health Care in Emergency Response: Insights from the WMA-OPA Experience

By Esaias Giorgis, MD

Former Chairman, Wabii Maccaa Association

As we gather for the 6th annual conference of the Oromo Physicians Association (OPA), I am honored to convey a message highlighting the shared objectives and collaborative efforts of our organizations, particularly in the realm of emergency response and healthcare prioritization. Our organizations share a common objective: to provide essential support and care to the Oromo people in Oromia, Ethiopia. Our collaborative efforts have been instrumental in achieving these goals.

The Wabii Maccaa Association (WMA) is committed to humanitarian aid, sustainable development, and advocacy in Oromia. Last year, in collaboration with OPA, we funded projects totaling over 9.25 million Ethiopian Birr. These projects provided life-saving medicine to malaria-infected individuals and supplied several hospitals with laboratory equipment to diagnose and treat malaria victims in Wallaggaa. This commitment highlights our mission and dedication to humanitarian aid, emergency response, sustainable development, and human rights advocacy.

In times of crisis, whether natural disasters like disease outbreaks and drought or man-made calamities such as war and internal displacement, prioritizing healthcare is paramount. As a physician and former WMA chairman, I have witnessed the profound impact of prioritizing healthcare in emergencies. Here are several reasons why healthcare should be a top priority in such situations:

1. **Preservation of Life**: Access to timely and quality medical care can mean the difference between life and death for those affected by emergencies. By prioritizing healthcare, we can save lives, ensure individuals receive the critical care they need, and prevent further complications.
2. **Mitigation of Further Health Risks**: During crises, individuals are often exposed to various health risks, including infectious diseases, malnutrition, and mental health challenges. By prioritizing healthcare, we can prevent the spread of disease, address nutritional needs, and provide mental health support, thereby reducing the likelihood of further health issues arising.
3. **Stabilization of Communities**: A healthy population is more resilient in the face of crises. Healthcare plays a vital role in stabilizing communities affected by emergencies. By providing medical care, we help individuals recover from injuries and illnesses, allowing them to resume their normal activities and rebuild their communities. This contributes to the overall stability and resilience of the affected region.
4. **Long-Term Impact**: Investing in healthcare during emergencies has long-term benefits. It can help prevent the spread of diseases, reduce the burden on healthcare systems, and contribute to society's overall well-being.
5. **Promotion of Human Dignity**: Healthcare is a fundamental human right and in times of crisis, it becomes even more crucial. Access to healthcare is not just about addressing physical ailments; it is also about upholding human dignity. By prioritizing healthcare in emergency response efforts, we show compassion and respect for every individual's inherent worth and dignity, regardless of their circumstances.

WMA has long recognized the significance of healthcare in emergencies, which is why we have partnered with OPA to provide crucial support during medical emergencies in Wallaggaa. Through our collaborative efforts, we have responded swiftly and effectively to crises, providing much-needed medical equipment and medicine to those affected.

The joint efforts of WMA and OPA exemplify our shared commitment to prioritizing healthcare in emergency response. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by crises. Our contributions have made a tangible impact, and we remain committed to continuing this vital work.

As we gather for this conference, let us reaffirm our commitment to prioritizing healthcare in emergency response efforts. Together, we can make a significant impact and ensure that those facing crises receive the care and support they need. Thank you for your dedication and tireless efforts in serving the Oromo community.

Best regards,

Esaias Giorgis, MD

Former Chairman, Wabii Maccaa Association



Message from Dr. Gudata Hinika

'The transformative role of overseas philanthropists volunteering in their homeland; Global heart local hand'

Congratulations to you, my esteemed colleagues and supporters of the Oromo Physicians Association.

For the past six years, the Oromo Physicians Association (OPA) has been on the frontlines, delivering effective, compassionate care to the hardest-to-reach communities, even under the most adverse conditions. Your tireless work, coupled with the invaluable contributions and fundraising efforts of the International Oromo Health Professionals Association (IOHPA), has significantly impacted healthcare equity in rural Oromia.

Our mission has also been strengthened by the unconditional generosity of the Oromo diaspora, whose backing has been vital. The expeditious assistance from the Ethiopian Ministry of Health and Oromia health offices has facilitated our initiatives, enabling us to overcome numerous challenges. We are particularly appreciative of the visionary mentorship and guidance of the World Health Organization, which has played an instrumental role in shaping our strategies and enhancing our capabilities. Let us also not forget the countless individuals who have worked selflessly behind the scenes to ensure our continued stability and growth. It is an honor to serve in this cause, and I am humbled and inspired by your work. Your commitment to selflessly giving time, expertise, and resources is the essence of compassion and transformative care.

As I express my gratitude for the opportunity to join hands in fostering sustainable solutions that embody HOPE — Health, Opportunity, Progress, and Education — I am awed and emboldened by the momentum we have built together in the pursuit of a brighter, healthier future for all.

While six years may seem fleeting, the impact we have achieved is remarkable. It is a testament to the resilience and strength borne of our shared purpose. Let this progress ignite our spirits and propel us towards embracing the transformative potential of the next phase in our journey towards exceptional healthcare.

Looking ahead, let us steer our focus towards six key power-building initiatives that will shape our future path:

1. Vital Communications Network: Establish robust communication channels to ensure that vital resources reach underserved communities, paving the way for health equity and inclusivity.
2. Thoughtful Resource Mobilization: Through strategic resource mobilization, reshape healthcare access in impoverished areas, fostering a collective movement towards equitable care delivery.
3. Growth-Focused Capacity Building: By investing in capacity-building programs, empower local healthcare professionals and nurture continuous learning, laying the foundation for sustainable healthcare development in resource-constrained settings.
4. Purpose-Driven Collaborations: Drive collaborative projects rooted in shared values to address critical healthcare challenges, fostering lasting solutions that prioritize equity and community well-being.
5. Meaningful Change through Advocacy and Policy: Dedicate efforts to advocacy, driving policy changes, promoting healthcare access, and advocating for systemic reform, championing health equity and social justice across all platforms.
6. Progressive Research and Innovation: Develop tailored solutions through innovative research initiatives to address healthcare challenges, uplifting impoverished communities and paving the way for sustainable global health equity models.

As we stand at the threshold of a new era, let us harness the collective might of our network, supporters, and allies to create a legacy of enduring progress and transformative impact in healthcare. With unity as our guiding light, let us march forward with unwavering commitment and boundless compassion, knowing that our shared efforts will shape the future of healthcare not only in Ethiopia but across the world.



With heartfelt appreciation for your unconditional dedication and tireless contributions,
Gudata S. Hinika, MD, FACS
Proud Member of the Oromo Physicians Association









A Joint message from Dr. Obsa Hassan, Sr. Obse Lubo, Dr. Nuredin Sule and Philantropist Farhan Abdullahi

Since the inception of the Oromia Physicians Association in December 2018, both as individuals and as the International Oromo Health Professionals Association (IOHPA) members, we have been dedicated to serving our people in all capacities. Our collaboration between the two organizations has enabled us to reach those affected by drought, conflict, and disasters in Oromia. We will never forget Sister Obse Lubo's journey with our comrades in Oromia to Eastern Oromia during a time when millions were displaced and camped from Dire Dawa to Hamarressa. Unfortunately, our people in southern and western Oromia faced a similar fate of displacement. Our most recent humanitarian efforts in Guji, Borana, and Wallaga further exemplify our commitment to collaboration and partnership in delivering services.

Moreover, our diaspora community is increasingly engaged in transforming the healthcare landscape in Oromia. For instance, IOHPA Board Members Dr. Obsa Hassan and Dr. Nuredin Sule, along with IOHPA volunteer and philanthropist Farhan Abdullahi and staff from Project CURE, traveled to Ethiopia in January 2024. We learnt firsthand while assessing hospitals in the Eastern, Southwestern, and Western regions of Oromia to determine their medical equipment needs for two rounds. We are pleased to celebrate the arrival of life-saving 6 shipping containers with millions of dollars of medical equipment and supplies in Oromia, with more to come. The already limited healthcare facilities in western Oromia have been devastated with recent conflicts and will need urgent help to improve delivery of services.

'Synergizing the global efforts in local roots for community betterment; best practices and ways forward'

To expand our support base, Haramaya University leaders, IOHPA members, the diaspora community, and Project CURE representatives held high-level meetings with US embassy officials from USAID and CDC Ethiopia. These discussions focused on future cooperation to improve healthcare services in underserved areas of Oromia and other regions of Ethiopia. Our work began collaborating with OPA, as well as federal and regional officials and stakeholders across the country. During the COVID19 pandemic, the fraternity relationships of OPA and IOHPA became the vehicle to creating advisory groups serving as the benchmark to create protocols and guidelines for COVID19 response countrywide.

Strengthening local capacity is also paramount. Led by Drs. Malik Tiba and Ismael Tura, we have engaged with Ethiopia's Ministry of Health, Presidents of three National Universities, the Head of the Oromia Health Bureau, Honorable Darartu Tullu, IOHPA Representative and Founder of Negele Arsi General Hospital and Medical College, Dr. Gudata Hinika, and Board members of the Oromia Physicians Association. These dignitaries and stakeholders convened to address the national response to esophageal cancer, develop national diagnosis and screening guidelines, and strategize on tackling the problem in southern Oromia.

Our dedication, teamwork, and commitment to the well-being of our people will lay a strong foundation for lasting health improvements in the region. We will continue to maximize our efforts with passion and perseverance, despite the daunting task of improving healthcare in Oromia. We believe that our diaspora communities' generosity, our wide network of partnerships, and our cooperation with local and international institutions will help us overcome any challenge and improve lives in Oromia and beyond.

In summary, our collective efforts have begun transforming access to healthcare across Oromia and mobilizing humanitarian support from diaspora members. We believe this will foster transcontinental cooperation, strengthen community resilience, and empower our nation. Ultimately, selfless individuals like Sister Obse, and Dr. Gudeta, the collective efforts of IOHPA/OPA inspire our generation to contribute to a better future for our nation.

We have seen the positive impact of OPA working with WHO, ICRC, IOHPA, WMA, the global Diaspora Oromo Community, and numerous other stakeholders. Undoubtedly under visionary and committed leadership, our shared history of working will continue to synergize global efforts for local community betterment, sharing best practices and charting ways forward.

May 25, 2024



Message from OPA Board Vice Chairman - Dr. Godana Jarso

'The need for collaboration between private sectors and Physician's Association'

Professional associations, such as the Oromia Physician's Association, are groups of experts organized to support the healthcare system and its beneficiaries through their knowledge, skills, and expertise. These associations play a crucial role in facilitating interactions among stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare system leaders, workers, and care utilizers. They engage in health-related policy agenda generation, discussions, and consultations. Additionally, their involvement in developing guidelines and protocols for practice and professional development is essential for achieving health-related goals such as health promotion, preventive, and curative services. Despite being relatively young, the Oromia Physician's Association has proven to be a strong and dependable organization in this regard.

Private businesses, particularly health facilities, are significant stakeholders in healthcare systems. Globally, major pharmaceutical and tech companies, such as Microsoft, support preventive health initiatives like vaccines and contraceptives and sponsor significant research projects both financially and through advanced technologies. These companies also play a major role in global emergency responses, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite having common interests and engaging in the same healthcare system, professional associations and private facilities or companies in our country have not focused on joint efforts to advance the corporate responsibilities of companies and the professional responsibilities of health experts. This lack of collaboration has led to inefficient and often unsuccessful outcomes for many national associations and companies.

To overcome these challenges, structured collaboration between business companies and professional associations is crucial for two reasons:

1. Support from Associations to Private Healthcare Facilities:

- Associations can aid in the professional development of private healthcare facilities by providing expert support related to guidelines, protocols, and advice on health-related practice standards.
- They can assist in recruiting and training relevant professionals and promote and regulate professional ethics, helping to resolve medico-legal issues.
- Associations can also help efficiently implement health-related interventions or donations that companies wish to undertake as part of their corporate social responsibilities.

2. Support from Companies to Associations:

- Companies can support associations by becoming institutional members or sponsors of their activities, such as health promotion or curative campaigns, emergency responses, and mobile clinics in remote areas.
- This support can be provided through direct financial contributions or logistical support based on project proposals from either side.

The Oromia Physician's Association has already set high standards and proven its capability in reaching the most needy communities during difficult times, such as natural disasters, conflict-affected areas, and the COVID-19 national emergency response. Therefore, it is an opportune time for private companies, especially those in the healthcare sector, to engage collaboratively with this professional association to improve the health of our population through mutual support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Godana Jarso, (MD, MSc, Internist)



Message from Dr. Hora Sediso,

'The hope of professional networking for professionals; stories behind generous donation'

I would like to start with tireless gratitude to the almighty God who gifted me with another chance in life with a miraculous healing. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to my brother Gemechu who has generously donated his liver to me, so that I could continue living.

I am deeply indebted to my friends, family, and various organizations, including my own OPA, for their prayers, compassion, and generosity. Gracious God took pity on me and preserved my life, touching the hearts of everyone involved and making me a witness. The love, prayers, and assistance extended to me should not be limited to my case alone, but rather continued for all my fellow brothers and sisters in need, allowing them to experience a new lease on life, just as I have. I understand that the help given to me came at a personal cost, not profit, and I believe this selfless kindness has moved the Creator's heart on my behalf. My plea before the Almighty is for Him to hear the cries and prayers of all people and extend His mercy. It is my earnest wish that this outpouring of love and support continues for all who require it.

I recognize that individual-level interventions are dependent on a person's unique circumstances. In contrast, institution-level initiatives can address problems and save the lives of all individuals under their care. Some established institutions are well-organized and capable, but their access is limited to a select few. Conversely, newer institutions may be less structured and proficient, yet able to reach and assist their younger members facing critical challenges. It is important to investigate the accessibility secrets of these newer institutions and expand their reach to all those desperately in need of help. This is not to suggest that the existing capable institutions cannot learn valuable lessons from the newer ones.

Essentially, physicians are the fundamental starting point in this scenario. They must be empowered to uphold their professional duties in life-saving work when the community faces health challenges. However, for physicians to effectively serve their society, they themselves must be present and available in the necessary health condition and quantity to expand their outreach to those in need of their assistance. It is critical that physicians prepare themselves to serve the community wherever and whenever their help is required.

Accordingly, when healthcare providers who serve the broader community face personal medical challenges beyond their control, it is necessary to have a structured institutional system in place to support their return to serving with compassion. In my scenario, OPA must be given special recognition for being present throughout my difficult journey, providing assistance in all aspects. It is worth noting that OPA has admirably reached and aided our society since its inception, and now we must fortify OPA on a solid foundation so that it can reach and support each of us when we are in need.

Last but not least, I want to thank Professor Mohamed Rela and his team at Dr Rela institue for liver transplant surgery they did under difficult circumstance. I wish one day we will have such a center here home to reach out others.

I thank you.

Dr. Hora Sediso (MD, Internist)



Message from OPA General Secretariat-
Dr. Sifessa Dessalegn

It is such a privilege to welcome and greet you all through this short message. It is a pleasure for all of us to meet in person this time of the year and refresh our shared commitment to our profession and the people we serve - our two big invaluable entities in life. Hello and welcome again!

Having served in OPA at different roles since its inception, it gives me a great pleasure to share this piece here on the annual bulletin. Given my affiliation with OPA going back to the time of its establishment, I would like to make this article in the form of a reflection on the experiences I had over the years.

How the vibrant mission OPA was being established with, back then when I was yet in medical school, coincided with my deep-seated belief of doing more than just ordinary efforts through energetic initiatives and volunteering was just a monumental happenstance. As soon as I learned about the association, I did not doubt becoming a member - an active one - as it felt like I found the right place to go to for me to help those in need but not just those in health facilities. Over the years, I had the same belief that I kept working with OPA - initially volunteering as a member, and since January 2020, as a general secretariat. I thank all members to believe in me and keep me as the general secretariat of this esteemed association for the past nearly five years.

In my years in this association, I have seen the nearly non-existent culture of organized volunteerism being incubated by OPA. It fills my heart with happiness when I think of the distances we have gone and the places we have reached, the meetings we had and the issues we addressed or tried our best to, the lives we have touched, the promises we kept, the things we made happen as a team of physicians who put their individual opportunities aside and cared about their community and fellow physician population. I strongly believe OPA has come a long way in its short history and existence in its current form.

We have managed to create great networks of our professionals, explored into the intricacies of our health system, secured meaningful and sustainable partnerships with variety of stakeholders, reached hundreds of thousands of underserved community groups, challenged a number of bureaucratic setbacks, helped to advance health care workers' education to mention a few among OPA's commendable achievements. Despite all the progress, it is undeniable that we still have a long way to go as an association and as a nation at large. It is appreciated that our nation's current healthcare industry status is changing in the right direction. However, OPA and other professional societies remain of paramount importance in leading and/or supporting the development of the sector with the priority and attention the sector deserves. It should always be our role to remind the government and the people that access to healthcare is a basic human right, and it is quite achievable if enough emphasis is given to its pressing nature.

Personally too, every experience I had with this association was such uplifting and so enriching for me that I proudly call this association, my home, and our people's and physicians' umbrella to gather and collaboratively work under, towards greatness of realising accessible and equitable health care for our underserved population and firmly stand for the rights of our selfless professionals in healthcare. That is why I remain committed to this association even after stepping down as the general secretariat of the association after serving for more than two terms. It is my belief that OPA is capable of driving great changes in the region as well as the nation as far as we stick together and strengthen our dedication. In our cognitive and collaborative connection lies a power of healing. With effective partnerships, we are going to achieve heroic milestones in the advancing health sector.

"Connecting for healing ourselves, our people and our nation; through which we manage to become healthcare heroes that knows no boundaries in serving humanity through mobilising capable humans with dreams"

Thank you, and stay safe

Sifessa Dessalegn (MD, MPH Internal Medicine Resident)

General Secretariat.



From Fractured Foot to Broken Heart-My Trip to Oromia, April 2023.

Over the last fourteen years, East African Medical Relief Foundation (EAMRF) has helped serve people in some of the most desperate places. With the help of donors and the community, we've been able to provide basic medical care, Cataract, cleft lip, fistula surgeries, training/education for the nurses and community at large for people throughout the Western region of Ethiopia. Recently, when preparing for my trip back home, I fractured my toes on my left leg into three places while playing with my kids. Though I felt excruciating pain, I chose to continue because the situation on ground- reality was one of the worst it's ever been. The repeated attacks by the paramilitary armed group from the neighboring Amhara region, referred to as "Fanno" by the locals, has caused hundreds of thousands of civilians in the border districts of Western Oromia, Ethiopia to flee from their homes and live in displaced makeshift shelters.



These makeshift shelters are set up by the Zonal Authorities in different parts of the region; there were/are over 1.5million of Internally Displaced People or IDPs all over the region. These IDP camps often lacked necessities, including medical services, access to sanitation/hygiene supplies, having extremely limited resources, lack of water, often overcrowded; children had no access to continued education. They were the bare minimum of a shelter for people who have been traumatized and forced to escape the heinous attacks, often arriving with nothing, some without even the clothes on their back. For instance, over 30,000 IDPs have settled in one of the IDP camps we went to visit at Shambu Bus Station, Horo Guduru, Wollega Region. Ethiopia has seen the biggest influx of IDPs between September-December 2022 with 141 IDP centers in the Oromia region, with most of them located in Western and Southern Oromia. The four Wollega zones in Western Oromia host 1.2 million IDPs or 80% of the total IDPs in the Oromia region and other IDPs are in Guji Zone and Eastern Oromia.

There are about 17 IDP camps in Western Oromia, we visited 3 of the camps. Upon arriving at Shambu and Guji IDP camps, we met some people who had been there for up to 5 months, babies that were born in the camp, pregnant women that were expecting to give birth, 6-8 family members often living in 1 tent. We heard stories from some of the elders at Girja IDP site, in Guji Zone, that they had been forced to leave their home 11 times over the past 4 months alone. They had limited access to food and had witnessed atrocities they would never forget. As often in times of war, the women face the most violent outcomes. One a woman named Lemane told me that her husband had been killed, she had 3 children including an infant with whom she had escaped to her neighbor's house. This was a neighbor that they were very close to, who had helped raise her children with her. The woman let her in and fed her and for the moment she and her kids felt somewhat safe. However, that night the woman's husband came home with a machete and made claims that he would kill anyone that doesn't belong to his group (supposedly ethnic Amhara), though they had lived in peace over the years. His wife calmed him down, but Lemane, after listening to the man felt frightened and could not sleep in the same house and left late that night escaping whatever fate may come into the jungle. Lemane said she would rather die in the jungle than killed by her neighbor. The plights of civil war are deeply mentally traumatic. The lack of trust and hatred that can be blown over time are so unexpected; people can't really breathe peacefully. Similar to that woman, many of the people had walked for hours, had left all of their property, their homes, cars, cattle's, farms, and shops destroyed and looted. They had lost children, husbands, parents, and arrived at the camp half-dead, sick, swollen legs, and full of terror. Men had to watch their female family members' gang raped and live to tell the story to place fear in others. Many women were breastfeeding babies that weren't theirs because the mother's had died on the road. Beyond the death in the hands of others, suicide – especially after public raping's by the "Fanno" Paramilitary were high. The shame and trauma of watching a family member in that position was intolerable. Anxiety, Post Stress Traumatic Disorder (PTSD), insomnia, and all of the ailments chaotic and violent life can create were the norm within the camps. Though without the right diagnoses, many just knew they were no longer the same people and barely alive in their thoughts. Arriving at camps, I was overwhelmed, feeling unprepared for what I was facing and how I was feeling. However, I knew along with the colleagues I was traveling with, listening to the stories and providing the donations we had brought would help even in the slightest way. We handed over 800 reusable menstrual pads for women/girls these kits were donated from "Days for Girls" organization based in USA. We bought and distributed formula milk, soap, scalp oil, shoes, and food items. We held mini trainings to create awareness about basic hygiene in order to help reduce the spread of infections among people at the camp. We answered questions, held hands, listened to their stories, and made notes of what else they would really need to continue to survive.



As the day went on, I was taken aback by the resilience and hope deep in the soul of the people. They believed they would one day return home, raise their kids in safety, provide an education for their kids and lead a successful life. They were grateful for the life they still had and for the help (though for me meager) that we brought. On every mission trip to Oromia, Ethiopia, the condition of the human spirit amazes me. I was also happy to see that the IDPs were getting some support from the local host communities. The cooperation between the regional government entities who are running the camps and other organizations such as church groups, various NGOs, universities, etc. was commendable, everyone was doing their best to support and contribute to the wellbeing of the IDPs. It helped solidify that we as an NGO (EARMF) were in collaboration with a community of people, that the Oromo people support each other when the needs arise. The government cannot solve all the IDP problems in the entire Oromia region of Ethiopia, it will require our collective action to help our people resettle and rehabilitate.

There is so much left to be done. This will be months, maybe a year of work in front of us. Considering that children account for more than half of the displaced people, there needs to be fast and critical action to help provide sustainable solutions. The people at the IDPs need basic necessities', financial support, psychological support, and more. They need supplies, support, and continued community resilience and focus. From clothing, hygiene and medical supplies to formula for the newborn babies. There is no delusion that we exist as an entity, EAMRF, for these types of moments and we've seen some of the worst situations in human nature. However, this last trip was one that surpassed my expectations on the conditions of suffering, and what I know is that our community can come together to do our best to help. I am greatly encouraged by International Oromo Health Professionals Association (IOHPA), Oromia Physicians Association (OPA), Oromia Health Bureau and other local organizations who supported EAMRF's recent mission trip through logistics, professional, and financial support. I'm forever indebted for OPA's team who were on the ground with me in Horo Guduru, Wollega and Girja, Guji Zone supporting the IDPs and providing medical care to those in need.



I went thinking about dealing with a fractured foot while doing the work, and I left Oromia with a broken heart for what we are going through as people. However, I also left knowing that the volunteering, the supplies, the education, the support from our community is something that we do have control over – we can get up in the morning and take what we have and help those that need it – the ease in which we can collaborate can, will, and does change one life at a time.

Sr Obse Lubo



OPA 6th Annual Conference Photo show (2022 & 2023 G.C)

1. 4th Annual Conference Award Recipients

4th Annual Conference

The 2022 OPA Award in the category of Achievement in an Appreciable Number of Research and Publications goes to Professor Esayas Kebede Gudina. Prof. Esayas is an honorable physician, one of the best scholars in his field, and a professor of medicine and consultant physician at Jimma University Institute of Health. His academic profile includes an MD from Jimma University (2006), a specialty in Internal Medicine from Jimma University (2010), a postgraduate diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK (2011), and a PhD in International Health from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany (2016).

Leadership experience: He has served as the medical director of Jimma University Specialized Hospital (2012–2014) and Vice President (Chief Executive Director) for Jimma University Institute of Health (2017–2019).

Research experience: He is currently leading multiple research projects in the field of infectious diseases with an emphasis on tuberculosis, HIV, malaria, meningitis, antimicrobial resistance, COVID-19, viral hepatitis, and infection prevention and control in healthcare settings. He has published 57 scientific articles in peer-reviewed international journals as lead author or co-author.

Current post: He is teaching in the Department of Internal Medicine at Jimma University and serving as a consultant physician at Jimma Medical Center. Additionally, he is contributing to COVID-19 control initiatives as chair of the scientific advisory council of the Jimma Emergency Operation Center for COVID-19 control.



The 2022 Award recipient for 'Extra Medical Services' was Dr. Dhaba Bayissa. He was born on 16 November 1976 G.C. in West Shawa, Gindabarat Woreda, in a specific area called Gaba Gamada. He attended elementary school at Chulute (Culluxxee) Elementary School and high school at Gindabarat High School. In 1995 G.C., upon completing high school, he scored 4.0 points for the first time in the history of the high school and joined Addis Ababa University Medical Faculty. He graduated from AAU in 2003 G.C. and was assigned to the newly constructed Nedjo Hospital as the director. He started the establishment of the hospital from scratch and developed it into one of the well-established and trusted hospitals in Oromia. Besides this, he performed many community services inside and outside the hospital, including responding to the 1996 E.C. malaria epidemic in the neighboring Jarso Woreda, specifically in an area called Shimel Tokke. After four years of government service, he started a private business with a small clinic in Nekemte, which later grew into two higher clinics with different specialists and equipment in the town. In addition to health services and social services, he established a road construction service and is building various small road projects, mostly in western Oromia woredas. He is married and a father of four children.



The 2022 Award recipient for 'Serving the Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic' was Arsi University. Arsi University showed tremendous effort in containing the COVID-19 pandemic since the occurrence of the very first case in our country. The university:

- Conducted wide community awareness campaigns regarding COVID-19 for two weeks in 17 different districts in the zone by dispatching large numbers of health personnel.
- Fulfilled different logistical needs for COVID-19 management and established a COVID-19 treatment center.
- Took the initiative role in renewing Bekoji Health Center and Halila Health Center.
- Provided improved water supply.
- Constructed additional latrines and took different crucial hygienic measures, covering all woredas and over 38 towns in the zone through community service.

Arsi University President, H.E. Dr. Dhuguma Adugna, Chief Executive Director of Arsi University College of Health Sciences, Dr. Didha Batu, and other officials from the university attended the conference and received the award on behalf of the university. Dr. Dhuguma also raised insightful suggestions regarding ways to improve healthcare services in our community.



The 2022 Award recipient for serving Oromia from abroad was Dr. Nuredin Sule. He has been encouraging diaspora health professionals from Oromia to do more to improve the healthcare system in our country.

Dr. Nuredin was born in Chiro, West Hararghe, and moved to Finfinnee when he started school. He attended Abadir Elementary School from the first grade through eighth and continued his secondary education at Addis Katama. The foundation of his education and love for learning was planted here in his country, which he carried with him when he migrated to the United States.

He immigrated to the US through the Green Card Visa program and settled in Atlanta, Georgia, where he has lived since. He attended college, chose the Pre-Pharmacy Pathway for two years, and then transferred to Mercer University for their graduate Pharmacy program. He graduated in 2004 with his Doctorate in Pharmacy with honors and became licensed right away. He has been a board-certified pharmacist, serving his community for the past 18 years.

What inspired him to become a pharmacist was a family friend who was a local pharmacist in Finfinnee where he grew up. He saw firsthand how vital this role was in ensuring the community's health. Whenever people got sick and needed medicine, this pharmacist was the go-to person. He was accessible and compassionate, taking care of everyone in any way he could, especially during a time when access to medical care and medication was difficult. The passion and compassion he demonstrated instilled in Dr. Nuredin a lifelong drive to follow in his footsteps. He chose his path and remained committed to it during his six years of study to become a pharmacist, never wavering or hesitating in his decision.

Dr. Nuredin was looking for ways to give back to his birth country, Oromia, even before the International Oromia Health Practitioners Association (IOHPA) was founded. He knew that his individual contribution would be welcome but insignificant given the severe healthcare needs in Oromia. He realized that coming together with other health practitioners from various fields could create a more impactful and meaningful contribution.

A group of healthcare professionals with roots in Oromia decided to establish IOHPA. The goal and mission of IOHPA are to improve healthcare standards and quality in underserved and rural parts of Oromia. Dr. Nuredin serves as the public relations officer and treasurer for IOHPA. They decided to work on the mission and vision of IOHPA, focusing on one area at a time. Their first major project was in Dr. Nuredin's birthplace, Chiro, specifically focusing on Chiro Hospital. This project put them in direct collaboration with the Oromia Physicians Association (OPA), and through this partnership, they have accomplished many goals. The relationship between IOHPA and OPA is crucial for delivering their vision of transforming healthcare across Oromia, and they plan to maintain it.

In 2019, Dr. Nuredin visited Oromia to examine the site of their project at Chiro Hospital. He meticulously documented the condition of the hospital, the staff, and the care provided to patients. Chiro Hospital is the only hospital serving the population of Chiro and surrounding areas, putting immense strain on the hospital and its staff. His observations of the hospital's conditions and the working conditions of the healthcare professionals were hard to witness. These professionals are under-resourced, underpaid, under constant pressure, and stretched to their limits, yet they

remain dedicated to serving their communities. Despite the challenges they face, they are invaluable assets to the community and should be respected and compensated accordingly. This is not a criticism but an observation from a fellow healthcare professional. When he returned home, he promised himself to do everything possible through IOHPA to help OPA, and he continues to strive to keep that promise. He firmly believes that every action counts and that every step taken, individually or as a group, towards delivering positive change is a step in the right direction.

He once said, "My dream of seeing my country, Oromia, build better healthcare systems and practices is not just a dream; it is practical and possible. It is not a choice for those of us who can contribute to and move this needle forward towards better healthcare and access to healthcare in Oromia; it is an obligation. If we do not help our people while we have the resources, expertise, and access, it is a massive waste of potential on our end and a devastating loss for our people.

"We all need someone to see us, to believe in us, and to share our passion with us. The healthcare professionals I met at Chiro Hospital were happy to see someone who shares their profession and passion come to see them. I had the opportunity to deliver medical supplies and train them on how to use that equipment to serve their patients better. I saw their passion, their vision for tomorrow, their concerns and worries, and their hope. Those of us who can help contribute to the visions of these amazing healthcare professionals at Chiro or anywhere else in Oromia must do so. I encourage and broadcast a call to action to diaspora health professionals from Oromia to contribute towards the mission of changing healthcare access and practice across Oromia. I want us to answer the call of our generation and leave a legacy and footprint all over Oromia. It is the least we can do for our country and people. In the words of the late Nuho Gobana, 'isin waamti Harmeen'—will we answer the call?"

2022 award recipient for their exemplary achievement in OPA cluster best performance was Wollega University OPA Cluster.

This cluster is one of OPA cluster organized at western Oromia. As soon as some of OPA members returned to Wollega after 3rd OPA annual Conference, focal person (Dr. Galmessa Chimdessa) arranged a meeting at Wollega University Referral Hospital (WURH). On that meeting there were discussion on how to achieve OPA's mission and visions. A committee of 4 physicians including cluster focal also established to facilitate activities.

After extensive discussion the following points were raised.

1. There should be a telegram channel for this cluster and it was opened immediately.
2. A bank account was opened for so that OPA members will contribute and they will post their receipt. A bank account was opened because it was believed that it will motivate members and increase a number of officially registered members
3. There was an emphasis on community service.
4. To achieve above objectives, how to work together with different hospitals and Wollega University was discussed and action plan was prepared



This cluster has been actively participating in planning and executing OPA's missions and visions for the past year, despite high security problems in the zone. The cluster mobilized members for formal OPA membership registration and was highly engaged in community service activities,



including antenatal care (ANC), during which they identified high-risk mothers and provided proper referral systems and management in remote areas like Bunno Bedelle and Chawaka districts.



This committed team also participated in the graduation ceremony of Wollega University. They conducted screenings for cataracts and established their own Disaster Team Management.

This committed team also participated in the graduation ceremony of Wollega University. They conducted screenings for cataracts and established their own Disaster Team Management.



OPA and OHB met in Adama and discussed areas of collaboration.

Continuous Professional Development and Trainings

OPA is accredited as both a CPD Provider and a CPD Accreditor. In collaboration with the Oromia Health Bureau and Adama Hospital Medical College, OPA provided training on 'Professional Ethics and Organizational Culture' for more than 120 General Practitioners and Senior Physicians from 20 hospitals in Oromia.



1st Round



2nd Round

OPA, in collaboration with Mega Lifesciences PCL, provided training on Antenatal Care (ANC) and Preconceptional Care Guidelines for senior Gyn/Obs practitioners.







Besides providing in-person trainings, OPA has been organizing webinars virtually. Renowned and experienced presenters such as Dr. Fekadu Girma (a Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist), Dr. Wondu Belayneh (a Gynecologist and Obstetrician), Dr. Yared Boru (an MD, MPH, Emergency Medicine, and Critical Care Specialist), Toltu Tufa (a Psychologist), and others have participated.

Events

OPA has been organizing events in collaboration with its stakeholders. In the pictures, multidisciplinary teams are seen poised and ready to provide emergency healthcare services during large public gatherings of Irrecha at Hora Harsadee and Hora Finfinnee. The teams comprise subspecialists, senior physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

The team members are shown in their uniforms, demonstrating readiness and professionalism. All teams and other professionals underwent training on "Public Emergency Preparedness and Response" a week ago, equipping them with updates to handle any potential casualties that may occur during the gatherings.

Irrecha 2022

Irrecha Hora Harsadee

























Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Community Outreaches





Pictures: OPA's call for National and International Humanitarian Health Actors and Community

Besides calling for due attention from the concerned body, OPA established an IDP support committee (with most of the members from the COVID-19 Advisory Council) and continued holding frequent Zoom meetings. With a generous donation from IOHPA and individual contributions, and in collaboration with OHB, OPA was able to deliver emergency medical supplies to IDPs in Shambu, Horo Guduru Wallaga, and Guji Girja.















Pictures: Emergency Medical Supplies to Guji, Girja Woreda, in February 2023

Borena

In the pictures, a multidisciplinary team is seen in action, providing emergency healthcare services to internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by severe drought in the Borena Zone and residing in Dubluk, Dhas, and Gololcha sites. The team includes doctors, nurses, and supporting staff from the zone, all focused and deeply engaged in their tasks. The arid landscape of Borena, with its dry, cracked earth and sparse vegetation, forms a stark backdrop, emphasizing the harsh conditions faced by the local population. Team members are seen evaluating patients, prescribing medications, advising on malnutrition and other health issues, and coordinating relief efforts. Their expressions reflect a blend of urgency and compassion. More than 800 people benefited from a single round of outreach by the team, and the remaining supplies were donated to the Borena Zone Health Bureau. The team was thanked by the Zonal Health Bureau and finally recognized by the Oromia Health Bureau.

OPA's Response to Drought affected area of Borena Zone






Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team had an introductory discussion with Borena Health Bureau officials and visited Yabello General Hospital before commencing free medical services on March 11, 2023, for IDPs affected by drought in various districts of the Borena zone, including Dirre, Dubluk, and Dhas.

Dubluk





Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to the communities displaced due to drought in the Dubluq district (Dubluq IDP camp), Borena zone, in March 2023.





Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to the communities displaced due to drought in the Dirre district (Gololcha IDP camp), Borena zone, in March 2023.








Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to the communities displaced due to drought in the Dhas district IDP camp, Borena zone, in March 2023.

Guji

In the photographs, multidisciplinary teams composed of doctors, nurses, and supporting staff are captured in the midst of their vital mission to deliver emergency healthcare services in the war-affected areas of the Guji Zone, Oromia Region, in 2023. They demonstrate their commitment to alleviating the suffering of those impacted by the conflict. Tents and medical supplies (donated by ICRC Ethiopia) are visible, and team members are shown in action.



Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to the communities at IDP camps in Aga Wayu Woreda, Haya Dima, Wachu Dima/Maracha, and Mallaya of Guji Zone in July 2023. Moreover, OPA inaugurated its Mobile Clinic in this district for the first time, in the presence of respective government officials and Abbaa Gadaa elders.



Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to the IDPs in Guji Zone, Girja District, Gobu Kebele, and delivered medical supplies donated by ICRC-Ethiopia in April 2023.



Picture: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services to Internally Displaced People at three sites in Wadera District, Guji Zone, Oromia, in April 2023.








Picture: During the cholera outbreak, the OPA Emergency Response Team provided free medical services at the Cholera Treatment Center (CTC) in Wadera town and donated some essential supplies to the center in April 2023.






Pictures: The OPA Emergency Response Team provided voluntary healthcare services for IDPs in Darme Dama town and Kanticha (Qanxichaa) kebele of Saba Boru woreda, Guji zone, Oromia. They also visited the Cholera Treatment Center in these areas and donated essential supplies for the Darme Health Center in April 2023.







Pictures: The second round of the OPA Emergency Response Team outreach trip to Saba Boru district, Guji zone, Oromia, provided free healthcare services for IDPs in August 2023.

Goro Dola










Pictures: The OPA Emergency Response Team: A substantial team of 22 was mobilized to Guji while offering support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Goro Dola, Oda Eba, and Garmadu, facing compromised healthcare services in Goro Dola district, Oromia, in November 2023.

Western Oromia

In the photograph, multidisciplinary teams consisting of doctors, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, nurses, psychiatric professionals, and support staff from West and Kellam Wallaga Zones are shown deployed in multiple rounds to a war-affected area hit hard by a malaria outbreak. The teams are seen in various stages of providing emergency healthcare services.

Amidst a backdrop of damaged infrastructure and a community in distress, team members are captured treating patients, distributing anti-malarial medications, and educating locals on preventive measures. These scenes are a testament to the continuous and tireless efforts of these healthcare professionals, bringing hope and relief to a beleaguered population.

Wallaga

The OPA Mobile Health Team was sent to Western Oromia to woredas affected by the malaria outbreak with antimalarial supplies contributed by WMA, IOHPA, WHO, UOECs, and the Diaspora Oromo Community abroad.











Pictures: The OPA Emergency Response Team responded to the malaria outbreak in Begi and Qondala woredas of West Wollega Zone, Oromia, with a three-round trip from September to October 2023.



Picture OPA_ERT: A team dispatched to Kellam Wallaga, extending crucial healthcare services to Hawa Galan and Dale Sadi districts, which are grappling with a deadly malaria outbreak.



Picture: Another team in West Wallaga provided services despite challenges.

Capacity Building

OPA supported healthcare facilities affected by the war and malaria outbreak in the West and Kellam Wallaga Zones. Essential medical equipment, including Hematology Analyzers, Chemistry Analyzers, Microscopes, Hemoglobinometers, Glucometers, and antimalarial supplies costing 8 million ETB, was handed over to the respective zone health bureaus. These resources have been allocated to benefit six hospitals (Ganji, Bube, and Gimbi of West Wallaga; and Gidami, Hawa Gelan, and Kake of Kellam Wallaga) and six health centers (Kobor, Likiti, and Shimal Toke of West Wallaga; and Alaku Dorgome, Tulu Shimala, and Machara of Kellam Wallaga).

Following informative presentations on the activities undertaken in 2023, engaging discussions transpired with active participation from OHB, IOHPA, WMA, and OPA Board and Executive members. Certificates of appreciation were conferred upon all stakeholders, recognizing their pivotal roles in making this event a reality. A particularly gratifying moment occurred when IOHPA unexpectedly presented us with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Our profound gratitude extends to WMA for their invaluable donations, which have played a crucial role in supporting these healthcare facilities. We also express our thanks to UOEC, IOHPA, Bay Oromo Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, GBS, Adde Treza Amme (owner of 1. Brook Park Home Health Care, 2. Ariana Investments LLC, 3. ASA LLC), and all our esteemed stakeholders for their unwavering support in this noble endeavor.







Pictures: Taken while handing over basic and emergency medical equipment and supplies purchased with generous donations from WMA, IOHPA, and others.







In the pictures below, recent teams are shown deployed in the West and Kellam Wallaga zones, distributing bulky antimalarial supplies donated by WHO_Ethiopia, as well as basic and emergency medical equipment purchased through the generous donations of various stakeholders in early 2024.

The teams are seen coordinating with local healthcare workers, ensuring that the supplies reach the identified healthcare facilities—six hospitals and six health centers. Their focused and collaborative efforts highlight the successful delivery of these crucial supplies, providing much-needed support to the healthcare infrastructure in this crisis-stricken region.









Basic medical equipment and supplies handover program to support health care facilities in Kellem and West Wallaga, affected by the malaria epidemic and conflict.

By Oromia Physicians Association in collaboration with Wabii Maccaa Association

Adde Treza Amme

Bay Oromo Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Selfless commitment to give back!

January 2024



Picture: Maccaa Tuulamaa Association and OPA signing an MoU to respond to malaria outbreak areas in West Wallaga, Oromia, February 2024.

Recognitions and Awards. (Borena)



Picture: Borena Zone acknowledged the OPA team that provided healthcare services for the communities displaced due to drought in Borena Zone, Oromia, in March 2023.



Picture: Oromia Health Bureau recognized the OPA team that provided healthcare services for the communities displaced due to drought in Borena Zone, Oromia, in 2023.

Guji



Picture: The OPA team was blessed by Abbaa Gadaa, and the Girja Woreda Health Bureau recognized them for their dedication to delivering healthcare services to the displaced communities in Guji Zone, Oromia, in 2023.

