



### **Short obituary of the late Professor Makonnen Assefa**

Several professionals in the education sector, particularly those in the field of health sciences, knew the late Professor Makonnen Assefa very well. Specifically, those trained at Jimma University – and recently some staff and students of Debre Tabor University and Addis Ababa University School of Public Health – have fresh memories of him.

Prof. Makonnen was one of the few visionary academics who dedicated his life to making education and training solve the practical problems of society. Although problem-oriented and problem solving is the *sine qua non* of educational programs in general, the former Jimma Institute of Health Sciences is the architect of problem-solving higher training institutions in Ethiopia. The institute embodied and championed a socially accountable education mission through its philosophy of community-oriented education. Prof. Makonnen was the mastermind of this philosophy. The Community-Based Education Program, with its three practical educational pillars, was in line with the yearly courses offered in classrooms and laboratories for every academic program. Every student went through the Community-Based Training Program (CBTP), Team Training Program (TTP) and Student Research Program (SRP) to foster orientation to local needs and develop the skills and mindset to solve problems in collaboration with the host community. The philosophy went viral, in that all newly established educational institutions, especially those in the field of health sciences, adapted and implemented this approach.

After his deserving retirement, the late Prof. Makonnen helped Debre Tabor University take community-based education to the next level by adding bi-weekly home visits to give students opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge to solving problems at family level. Prof. Makonnen believed and toiled to see his country prosper through needs-based and problem-solving education. He was keen to harness the global abundance of knowledge and the power of information communication technology to eradicate poverty and hunger from rural Ethiopia.

Prof. Makonnen was an accomplished figure in public health who made theories speak and applied them to improve the lives of people. He was a great mentor; teacher and kind-hearted human being who helped many people find their way to success.

While Prof. Makonnen's legacy will endure, this special issue represents a final contribution to his commitment to educational excellence, which hopefully inspire actions to reform Ethiopia's public health education to cater for the dynamism of the 21st century.

Rest in eternal peace, Prof. Makonnen! Your ever-shining contributions remain to inspire several people.

The Public Health Education Taskforce for the 21st Century.