

## **A Heart That Serves – The Story of Semira**

The morning sun had just begun to rise when our twelfth round of voluntary service began. The air was cool and still, yet within me there was a warmth that words could hardly express. My name is Semira, and that day I stood among a group of young volunteers whose hearts were filled with compassion, ready to give and serve our community with love.

Our journey started with a blood donation campaign. We managed to collect nine units of blood, each one representing a precious chance for life. The atmosphere was filled with courage and unity. Even those who feared needles faced them with smiles, knowing that their small act could save someone's life. We worked together joyfully, and it filled us with hope and pride.

Beyond the campaign, we continued our efforts in several areas around our town. At the local high school, we painted the old corrugated iron fence, turning something dull into something bright and welcoming. In the area known as Amanuel Mewucha, also called Air Tahan, we planted young saplings to bring life and greenery to the neighborhood. Around forty-five holes were dug in the Gabriel area for planting trees. Even though our hands were tired, the thought of seeing those saplings grow into strong trees gave us energy to continue.

At Medhanialalem School, we repaired twenty broken student chairs, giving students a more comfortable place to learn. We also cleared the weeds that surrounded the Youth Recreation Center, making the space clean and welcoming again. Another major task was washing twelve quintals of clothes that belonged to children and elderly people. It was exhausting work, but every clean piece of clothing brought smiles and dignity to those who received them. Seeing their joy made all the effort worthwhile.

During the Shadayi Festival, we organized another blood donation drive, where about twenty-five people came forward to donate. We also reached around three hundred elderly people and children through a clothing distribution campaign, giving them comfort and warmth. Later, for the New Year celebration, we raised thirty-seven thousand five hundred thirty-one birr to organize a special lunch program for those in need. On that day, we were

able to serve meals to two hundred sixty-seven elderly and vulnerable individuals.

Watching them eat peacefully, some with tears of gratitude in their eyes, filled our hearts with deep happiness.

Our weekly service continued regularly, every Thursday at Medhanialem Church and Saturday at Maryam Church. During these visits, we cared for the elderly and those in need by washing their hair, cutting their nails, giving them baths, and providing soap and other small items to help them stay clean. The sight of the elderly sitting quietly, some with tired eyes and worn-out clothes, touched us deeply. Many of them had no one left to care for them, yet they still greeted us with blessings and prayers.

The moments we spent washing their feet were the most emotional. As we knelt before them, it was not out of pity but out of love and respect. Every drop of water that touched their feet seemed to wash away pain, loneliness, and despair. In their eyes, we saw both sadness and gratitude, and in our hearts, we felt something greater than joy — we felt purpose.

Although the work was tiring and often done under the hot sun, it gave me a deep sense of fulfillment. Each day of service reminded me that true happiness does not come from what we receive, but from what we give. Serving others taught me humility, patience, and compassion.

As we continue this journey, I know we will keep returning to feed the hungry, to clothe the poor, to wash the tired, and to bring comfort to those who have been forgotten. Because once the heart learns to serve, it never stops.

-Here are some photos at a place that I volunteered







