



FROM EXCLUSION TO ACHIEVEMENT

Born in 2015 in the East Bale Zone of Laga Hidha Woreda, Nasru Safi entered a world already stacked against him. The fourth child in a family with six children, he was born with a physical disability. His early life was shadowed by deep isolation, but his inspiring journey from obscurity to top student is a powerful testament to the power of resilience, community, and inclusive education.

For Nasru's mother, his birth brought not joy, but a sense of shock and confusion. "I felt ashamed, as if having a disabled child was a curse from God," she recalled. Driven by societal stigma and a lack of understanding, the family made a painful decision: they kept Nasru's condition hidden. Believing that school was an impossibility for him, they

consigned their son and themselves to a life of quiet isolation.

Nasru's fate began to change with the intervention of Action for Development (AFD). The organization launched a crucial initiative, training Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) members and teachers on gender and disability-responsive education. This program was designed to dismantle the stigmas that had imprisoned Nasru. Equipped with newfound knowledge, the PTSA members reached out to families like Nasru's, delivering a powerful message: children with disabilities deserved the same opportunities as their peers. This community support gradually chipped away at the family's long-held beliefs.

Encouraged and supported, they took a monumental step and enrolled Nasru in a special needs class at Anole Kurkuru School, finally breaking down the barriers of isolation and exclusion.

Nasru was initially assessed at the school before transitioning to an inclusive classroom. By Grade Two, he was learning alongside 65 classmates. A strong, courageous, and active student, Nasru's sheer determination and hard work led to remarkable success. He not only kept up but ranked first in his class, receiving awards for his outstanding performance. His academic triumph was a source of immense joy and pride, fundamentally shifting his family's perspective. Where they once saw a curse, they now saw a unique journey demonstrating the power of perseverance and hard work. The entire family became active participants, and Nasru's achievements even inspired his siblings to strive for better results.

The collaborative efforts of AFD and HI provided essential, practical support,

giving Nasru a wheelchair that improved his mobility and access to education.

Now in Grade Three, Nasru is a student filled with ambition and dreams, his journey is a living illustration that disability does not equate with inability; rather, it means having different abilities.

He expressed his gratitude simply and powerfully: "I would like to thank Anole school, the PTSA, and the teachers for their unwavering support. I am also grateful to AFD for providing me with the materials that enabled me to come to school with less difficulty. Finally, I want to acknowledge my family and friends who support me every day."

Nasru Safi's story is a profound reminder of the untapped potential within every child when given the opportunity and support to thrive. His journey from exclusion to academic excellence highlights the importance of community support, awareness, and inclusive education, proving that with determination, anything is possible.

