

# My Biggest Dream: To Serve My Country”

## Dr. Hali Yassin Hassan



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By Sabrina Solomon

*Dr. Hali Yassin Hassan is an Eritrean who was born and raised abroad. Though she visited during school breaks, her experience in her homeland was limited. Driven by her parents’ stories and a deep desire to contribute, her post-graduation dream was to return to Eritrea. Here’s Dr. Hali’s interview with Agizo magazine.*

**Please introduce yourself to our readers.**

I was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 1994. My parents left Eritrea before its independence, so my siblings and I were raised there. Despite living in Saudi Arabia, we maintained a strong Eritrean identity. Our family gatherings were filled with discussions about our people, culture, and history. We also visited Eritrea during school breaks and grew up feeling very connected to our roots.

**Tell us about your educational journey.**

I was always passionate about school. My parents recall how attentive I was from a young age. Before university, I took an English course at the Eritrean community school in Saudi Arabia. After completing that, I pursued my dream of becoming a doctor, driven by a desire to help people. I was accepted into a medical university in Sudan and moved there in 2013. In university, I met ten Eritrean women from around the world, an unforgettable experience. After five years, I graduated and completed a year-long internship in Sudanese hospitals.

## **How was your internship in Sudan?**



I worked in three hospitals, gaining practical experience in operating rooms, delivery rooms, paediatrics, and more. It was a valuable opportunity to work in a different environment, which contributed to my personal and professional growth. In 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, I returned to Saudi Arabia. My plan was to immediately go to Eritrea, with my parents' full support. Unfortunately, travel restrictions due to the pandemic delayed my plans for two years. Once things normalized, my parents and I took the first flight to Eritrea.

## **What happened when you arrived? Was Eritrea what you expected?**

Some people doubted I could adapt, having been raised abroad. But I felt at home. Before arriving, I contacted the Eritrean embassy in Saudi Arabia to express my intentions. Upon arrival, the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students welcomed me and facilitated my placement at Orotta Hospital. I worked there for six months, an invaluable experience. I then had to return to Saudi Arabia for a brief visit, which turned into a longer stay. However, my heart remained in Eritrea. The positive experiences, my colleagues, and my patients drew me back in 2024. Despite my initial nervousness about returning after a long absence, my colleagues welcomed me warmly. I don't think I'll ever have an experience like it anywhere else. I learned about respect, kindness, and communication. In my line of work, I met diverse people and learned how to interact with them effectively.

## **You worked with respected Eritrean doctors. What was that like?**

The doctors here are highly respected and incredibly skilled. Their knowledge is extraordinary. Our challenge is not a shortage of qualified doctors but equipment. I learned as much from them as I did from my formal education. They were like a second university to me.



### **What are your plans?**

I want to pursue further education, particularly in maternal health. In the country where I grew up, female doctors treat female patients. I want to continue helping women. While here, I learned that what matte

rs is the quality of the doctor, not their gender. With advanced education, I will return to Eritrea to continue serving.

### **What recommendations do you have for young Eritrean diasporas?**

We have a unique and welcoming culture. My work experience here was significantly different from my time in Sudan. Eritrea is known for its security and peaceful people. I encourage Eritrean Diasporas to return and contribute, even in small ways. Come, help your nation, experience your culture, and see for yourself instead of just hearing about it. Thank you.

*We wish you all the best, Dr. Hali Yassin Hassan.*

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